

are encumbered with over \$40,000 of loan debt per person on average, you are not able to get that small business loan, and you are not able to start that new business to put those ideas into action and create jobs.

In fact, a recent poll last month indicated that the majority of millennials would sacrifice their very franchise, that is the right to vote, in exchange for relief from their student loan debt. All too often, heretofore, the words "student debt" in the Halls of Washington have scared up images of free college. Anyone knows—even Mr. SANDERS knows—that nothing is free; someone pays. But that is no excuse to ignore the problem. Why not allow individuals the option and opportunity to pay their own debt?

Over 40 million Americans—myself included—are paying back \$1.3 trillion in student debt, yet we have done nothing realistic to address this problem.

How do you address new problems? You must address new problems with new ideas. H.R. 4584, the Student Security Act, is just that.

I will stop as an aside to take a moment to thank a young man, Elliot Harding, a recent student from Charlottesville, Virginia, who came to me with this idea: What do we do as a nation if we lose the creativity of an entire generation because of this burdensome debt? Because that is what we are on the precipice of.

I contemplated it and decided that this isn't something I was able to let happen on my watch. So as a result, I was all ears as he explained the idea that became student security.

It is as follows: right now we know that the Social Security plan that our seniors—indeed, my very mother—rely upon to get by on a day-to-day basis is facing an imminent bankruptcy, that solvency is in question, and that by 2034, according to most estimates, there will be no solvency. That is a problem, too.

Many of you at home are wondering how I moved from student loan debt to Social Security, and that is the beauty of this idea. To empower individuals to make decisions for themselves and address these very real challenges, the Student Security Act would allow a student to write off \$550 of student loan debt for every month that they were willing to voluntarily forgo a Social Security benefit. The time value of money, my friends. We have forced no one to do anything. We have in no way, shape, or form changed one scintilla of the promise that is Social Security that we have made for generations to our seniors. But at the same time, we have provided an 11 percent increase in the solvency of that program, extending the life of that promise without raising taxes and without forcing a single soul to do a single thing against their will.

That would translate into \$6,600 per student, per year, that they were willing to voluntarily forgo receipt of Social Security benefits.

The bill would cap at a maximum of \$40,150 in debt relief. This would correspond to a 6-year delay in receipt of Social Security benefits, and, again, no one would be forced to do a thing, but students who sought to remove from their lives the black cloud of student loan debt would be empowered to, at their own discretion, make this decision for themselves.

□ 1730

As they say in the TV world: But wait; there is more.

We ran this program past the Congressional Budget Office and then later past the Social Security Administration. What would the impact on Social Security be when empowering people to make decisions for themselves? And, by the way, how would we defray the costs as to people who are young now, who won't invest in Social Security until later, versus the fact they are students now?

The numbers are not good; they are great. We would allow cosigners on loans this option as well, to avail their children or grandchildren of these benefits should they choose to defer receipt of Social Security benefits, again to the amount of \$40,150. That would begin immediately.

That would also save, according to the Social Security Administration, \$700 billion, while also addressing the very real needs of American students currently hamstrung by a broken college finance system.

So what do we do with the Student Security Act?

We are delighted to welcome Congressman FERGUSON, Congressman BRAT, Congressman ROKITA, and Congressman MESSER. We invite our colleagues from both sides of the aisle to look at this outside-the-box, dynamic new way of addressing the solvency of Social Security and the insolvency of our youngest, most creative generation.

The data indicates that we would extend the viability of the Social Security program by 11 percent of what is needed to make it wholly solvent in perpetuity. That would be the equivalent of a 0.3 percent increase in the payroll tax, but without a tax increase and without taking anything from anyone without their voluntary entry into the program.

It would lift the black cloud of student loan debt to the tune of over \$40,000 per person in a world where 90 percent of debtors have less than \$40,000 in debt, and it would return to the coffers of this indebted Nation, by the Social Security Administration's estimates, \$700,000,000,000—seventenths of \$1 trillion.

So I stand here today and ask you to ask yourselves:

Do you trust people to make good decisions for other people?

Do you believe that people should rely on government or that government should rely on people?

Do you believe that this country can harness the ideas and the vision and

the energy of what is inherently the most creative generation if we are able to free these young people from burdensome debt that stops them from engaging in key life events like buying a home and buying a car and getting married and starting a business?

Do you believe that we need to think outside the box to ensure that we keep the promise that is Social Security, which has been made in this country for generations?

If you, like me, believe this and are a Member, I invite you to join as a patron of H.R. 4584, regardless of your party affiliation or ideology. If you, like me, as a citizen, believe this is a good idea, I invite you to speak to your Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, this is an opportunity not only to change how we do business, but to empower people to empower themselves to create greater opportunity and prosperity in this country by harnessing the energy and ideas of our youngest and largest living generation and to keep the promise that we have made for generation after generation and to people like my mother that Social Security will remain reliable and solvent.

Again, I invite you to join on this legislation or contact your Representative and encourage them to join. H.R. 4584, the Student Security Act, is a new way of addressing an old problem that relies on the oldest solution, and that is individuals empowered to work for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS: GOP TAX SCAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MITCHELL). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RASKIN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be here on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

We are going to have some discussion about recent developments in Congress over this week, and we are going to focus on the proposed tax legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Washington (Ms. JAYAPAL), vice chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. She is going to talk about what that plan means for working people in America.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. RASKIN for his continued leadership in our caucus. It is such a pleasure to serve next to him on the Judiciary Committee. We have a lot of work to do. It is really terrific to be able to do it with him, to talk about the tax plan.

I don't think this is a tax plan. I think it is tax scam. I think it is a heist. I think that the middle class in this country is not going to benefit from this. Middle class Americans who are hoping for a tax break for the holidays are going to be sorely disappointed. Maybe they get a few lumps of coal.

In fact, polling shows, across the country, that this is the singularly most unpopular bill that Congress has considered in a very long time. Seventy-five percent of Americans across this country don't think it is a good idea. They are not fooled by the promises that are being made about what this bill does.

Let's really talk about what this bill does.

We know that the wealthiest will benefit. The wealthiest 1 percent will receive 50 percent of the tax cuts. In 2019, 18 percent of the tax cuts in this bill will go to the wealthiest 1 percent. But by 2027, that number climbs to 62 percent, with an average tax cut of \$33,000.

What else do we know about this bill?

We know that the largest corporations will benefit. To pay for this massive tax cut for corporations, the Senate tax bill will repeal the individual mandate part of the Affordable Care Act, something that Republicans have tried to do over and over again this year.

The American people have spoken up and said: No, we know that healthcare is a right, not a privilege. We want our healthcare. We know the Affordable Care Act is not perfect, but it has done much to protect the healthcare of people across this country.

Yet, in spite of that, the repeal of the individual mandate has been put into the Senate tax bill, and it would result in 13 million more people being uninsured. It would also result in a 10 percent increase in premiums for Americans across the country, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

We know, also, that this bill is wholly fiscally irresponsible. It is funny. For years, Republicans have yelled and screamed about the huge deficits we have, yet this bill would add between \$1 trillion and \$1.5 trillion in deficits to what we already have. That would lead to a mandatory cut in critical programs.

Let's just talk for a minute about what exactly this tax scam will mean for ordinary Americans across the country.

In order to pay for the tax cuts that we have talked about for the wealthiest and the largest corporations, it means that millions of working families and poor folks across this country are going to end up paying more. Not only that, there are incentives in this bill that would actually create an incentive for American companies to take jobs off of Main Street, close factories here in the United States, and move those jobs overseas. It will make it harder for families to make ends meet.

The Senate bill would raise taxes on 78 million middle class families, and millions of families across the country would lose their healthcare. In my district alone, nearly 31,000 constituents would lose their healthcare.

This bill would also put real roadblocks in the way of young people looking to get ahead.

Two of the eliminations of tax exemptions in this tax bill that offend me the most and should offend all Americans across the country are, number one, there is, essentially, a tax on being sick. There is a tax on long-term care for Americans across this country.

Right now, if you have a family member who is in long-term care or has a serious illness, the expenses that you pay for that individual, that family member, you can deduct those medical expenses. With this tax scam, the tax heist that is being proposed, you would no longer be able to deduct those medical expenses. So you are being taxed for being ill or for needing care as you get older.

In addition, we are taxing education. We already know that there is \$1.4 trillion in student loan debt across this country, more than even credit card debt in this country. Young people have to make these terrible choices about whether they are going to go \$80,000 into debt or whether they are not going to get higher education. That is wrong.

This tax bill would actually take away some of the tax benefits that we give to graduate students, for example, when they get help to be able to complete their graduate education. It would take away the exemptions that currently exist.

If you are a teacher and you buy pencils or paper or supplies for your classroom, that is currently a deductible expense. It would take that away for teachers, but not for corporations. If corporations buy supplies, that is tax deductible, but not if you are a teacher. That is just crazy.

It prioritizes the wealthy by allowing wealthy families to avoid the estate tax. Let's talk about the estate tax for just a minute.

There are 5,400 families across the country that pay the estate tax. It is a very small number of the wealthiest families. But, in fact, what this does is say that is even too much. We are going to double the exemption. Now, \$11 million, even fewer families are going to pay that, but it is going to cost middle class families a couple of hundred billion dollars in revenue.

The experts across the spectrum are arriving at the same conclusion: this bill is bad for regular working families.

The National Association of Realtors has said this: The Senate tax bill "puts home values at risk and dramatically undercuts the incentive to own a home . . . our estimates show that home values stand to fall by an average of more than 10 percent, and even greater in high-cost areas."

How about the Fraternal Order of Police? "The FOP is very concerned that the partial or total elimination of SALT deductions," something very important to my home State of Washington, "will endanger the ability of our State and local government to fund these agencies and recruit the men and women we need to keep us safe."

That is a quote from the Fraternal Order of Police.

The American Council on Education has said this: "As a result, we are deeply concerned that at a time when post-secondary degrees and credentials have never been more important to individuals, the economy, and our society, the tax reform proposal approved by the Senate could make college more expensive and undermine the financial stability of higher education institutions."

Let's be clear about what is happening here. The Republicans have a plan, and it is like a little three-step dance:

First, transfer trillions of dollars of wealth from middle class families and the poorest amongst us to the wealthiest corporations who are already not paying their fair share.

Second, when you do that transfer, explode the deficit. The estimates are that \$1.4 trillion, \$1.5 trillion would be added to the deficit.

Finally, use the fact that you are exploding the deficit to actually cut programs that are critical to Americans across the country, like Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. We know that, as written, this bill would trigger mandatory spending cuts to Medicare and Medicaid of significant amounts.

So the reality is that we are in a situation where this is incredibly unpopular. The polling shows right now that Americans are not buying this tax scam: 68 percent say that the tax bill helps the wealthiest; 54 percent say the tax bill favors big Republican donors; 61 percent say that Medicare and Social Security cuts would ultimately end up being the vehicle that is used to pay for these tax cuts to the wealthiest; and 68 percent say that changes to the Affordable Care Act should not be in this tax bill.

□ 1745

Here is where we are. The House passed its bill on November 16. In the early hours of December 2, just last Friday, the Senate passed its version.

We are going into conference committee now, which means that a group of legislators from the House and a group of legislators from the Senate get together and they try to work out the differences between the two bills. Then, ultimately, whatever that compromise is, if it is worked out, would come back for a vote in the House and the Senate.

So, now, more than ever, we need the voices of people across the country to call and to talk about the concerns that working people across this country have. We do need a real reform of the tax system to simplify it, to make sure that people are paying their fair share. But that is not what this is. This is a tax scam. It is a heist. It is transfer of trillions of dollars in wealth from middle class families and the most vulnerable to the wealthiest who do not need that money.

The reality is that we need to be investing in the American people. We

need to be investing in jobs and in education. We need to be making sure that middle class families are getting a break, that they can actually think about a future for their kids, for the next generation, that is better than the one they have.

We have very little time, but, Mr. Speaker, I am very sure that we in the Progressive Caucus and we in the Democratic Caucus are going to do everything we can to fight for working people, for the most vulnerable among us, and to protect things like CHIP, the Children's Health Insurance Program, to protect temporary protected status for immigrants across the country, and to make sure we are passing a clean Dream Act. These are the kinds of priorities we should be focusing on, not lining the pockets of the wealthiest corporations and transferring jobs from the United States to tax havens elsewhere.

We have a lot of work to do to make sure that, in this very short period of time, people speak up and speak out and make sure that we do not pass this bill, make sure that we, instead, work together in a bipartisan way for tax reform that actually benefits working families.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative RASKIN for his leadership on the Progressive Caucus.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative JAYAPAL for her wonderful remarks and her terrific leadership here on behalf of the people of Washington and on behalf of middle class and working class Americans all across the country.

Mr. Speaker, may I trouble you to ask how much time I have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FRANCIS ROONEY of Florida). The gentleman from Maryland has 47 minutes remaining.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Caucus greatly appreciates this time to talk with the American people. For me, it is always one of my favorite moments in the tremendously busy weeks that we have got here on Capitol Hill and in Congress.

I represent 800,000 people in Maryland's Eighth Congressional District, which includes Montgomery County, Frederick County, and Carroll County. I have the honor of going to work for them, essentially, 7 days a week. I live just about 25 minutes from Capitol Hill, and I take the Metro or drive to work, come back home, and I get to spend pretty much every day both with my district and with my colleagues here in Congress.

This is a special time of the week for me because so many of my colleagues are on airplanes or on trains going back to where they come from, and they spend a lot of their time on Mondays and Fridays traveling. I get to be here, and I get to work. I have a little more time to think, Mr. Speaker.

Because we are so buffeted by events, tweets, conflicts, and controversies, we don't always have time to think. I get

to use the time on Mondays, Thursday nights, and Fridays to be a little bit more reflective and deliberative about what it is we are doing here in Washington.

I want to start by just bringing everybody up to date about an alarming new legislative development before I get back to the tax bill, which will be next week's problem.

Yesterday, the House of Representatives passed something that they call the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017. The entire bill is fraudulent, beginning with its name, because it asserts that it has something to do with reciprocity, but it doesn't.

Right now, any State that has a law governing the issuance of concealed carry permits to its citizens can decide to work with its neighbor to allow a reciprocal arrangement. About half of the States have done that; they have deals with their neighbors.

But this act would wipe all of the reciprocity agreements out. It would impose one national standard on everybody in America, reducing everybody to the lowest, most permissive States in the Union in terms of concealed carry.

Now, in my State, in Maryland, we have a number of very serious hurdles to get over before you get the right to carry a loaded concealed weapon. You can't be mentally unstable or dangerous. You can't be a domestic offender. You can't be a violent criminal convict, a felon, or a misdemeanant. You have got to show that you know how to use weaponry, and so on. We take it very seriously.

Several dozen States have similar laws; others have much laxer and much looser laws. That is federalism. Everybody decides for themselves.

But this legislation that they passed yesterday would wipe out the State laws of every State in the country and drag us down to the bottom. It is not a race to the bottom; it is a plunge to the bottom.

They say that if you can get a concealed carry permit in any State—and in some States like Florida, there are 1.7 million people with concealed carry permits—you can go anywhere in the country. It is a passport to override the laws of every other State in the Union.

There are more than 14 million concealed carry permits in the United States, and now, suddenly, that is 14 million more people with guns who can come to your State, over your State laws, when you don't want it.

Oh, and guess what else they have snuck in here. The people who claim not to like litigation have created a whole new cause of action. They can sue the police officers if they feel the police officers have detained them too long. But, of course, the police officers are going to detain them too long because they have to figure out whether or not they have a right to the gun.

In the nationalization of concealed carry, have they created a bureaucracy, a computer where we are able to

figure out whether someone is carrying a real concealed carry permit or a fake ID concealed carry permit? No, not at all. That is put upon you, your State, to try to figure it out. If you hold the person too long, they can sue you, and guess what: attorneys' fees for the police officers, attorneys' fees awarded against the sheriffs, attorneys' fees against our law enforcement officers for trying to keep us safe by trying to enforce our State laws.

Now, we have two opportunities to stop this. One is in the U.S. Senate.

I already spoke to one Senator who was absolutely dumbfounded and amazed that such legislation would even be introduced, after more than two centuries of the history of the United States, somebody would put in a bill to try to extinguish the State concealed carry laws all across the country and give other people who wouldn't have the right to get a gun in your State the right to come there; and this after some of the worst firearms massacres and disasters in our history: the Las Vegas attack, which led to the deaths of 59 of our countrymen and countrywomen, and the attack in Sutherland Springs, Texas, which killed dozens of people.

The gun violence has even come here to Washington and to the Capitol and to the Members of Congress, ourselves, and still we haven't done anything.

We don't take up a universal criminal background check to close the internet loophole, to close the private sale loophole of people selling guns in the parking lot at 7-Eleven, so we close the loopholes that make us an absolute outlier in terms of the civilized world. We don't take that up.

We don't take up legislation to ban military-style assault weapons, like the ones that were used in Newtown, Connecticut, to assassinate 20 schoolchildren at pointblank range. We don't take up that legislation.

We don't even take up the legislation that they promised, which we thought that they wanted to do, which was to get rid of the bump stocks. No, that faded away, too.

Instead, they bring us this proposal to drive us deeper into the cycles of gun violence and misery that the NRA and the GOP have taken us to in America.

So, there are two opportunities to stop this madness. One is in the United States Senate, but the other is this: the pretended champions of the U.S. Constitution are violating the Constitution; they are trampling the Constitution.

Why?

Well, the Congress of the United States is an institution with limited enumerated powers. We don't have the right to do whatever we want as Congress. We have to exercise a real power.

Well, what power is being exercised here?

Well, there are only a couple of possible candidates. One, they say we are regulating commerce, but that is patently absurd. There is no commerce

that is being regulated in any way at all. It doesn't say anything about business and it doesn't say anything about money. There is no commerce.

The Supreme Court authority is very clear about that. That is why the Supreme Court struck down the Gun-Free School Zones Act, which my friends across the aisle were totally opposed to. They said: Well, that has nothing to do with commerce. The possession of a gun within a school zone has nothing to do with commerce. You have to strike it down.

Well, equally, the possession of your concealed carry weapon has nothing to do with commerce either. So that doesn't help them.

Then they would say: Well, really what we are doing is we are vindicating the Second Amendment. The Second Amendment gives you the right to do it.

There are a couple of odd things about that. One is that, if the Second Amendment gave you the right to take a concealed carry gun anywhere you want in the country, why has no court ever said that, and why aren't they just bringing a lawsuit?

The Federal courts across the land have been overwhelmingly clear that the Second Amendment does not give you a right to carry a loaded concealed gun. You don't get that right under the Second Amendment. If you have that right, you get it from your State government.

I thought that was something that my friends across the aisle believed in: federalism and State powers and State rights. But, no, they would say: Well, this is an enforcement of the Second Amendment.

I suppose the Supreme Court also struck down that bit of trickery in a case called *City of Boerne v. Flores*, which dealt with the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. There, Congress said, overwhelmingly—I think it was unanimous—we are going to overrule, essentially, the laws of the States and say that any burden on people's religious free exercise is presumptively unconstitutional, unless you can show that there is a compelling interest in your State against it.

The Supreme Court said: Wait, where does Congress get the power to do that?

Congress said: Well, we are just enforcing people's free exercise rights.

The Supreme Court said: You don't enforce people's rights by changing the meaning of the right.

Similarly, you don't enforce the Second Amendment right, which, undoubtedly, exists under the 2008 *Heller* decision, which said you have a right to a handgun for self-defense, you have a rifle for purposes of hunting and recreation, but you don't extend those rights, change the meaning of those rights in the name of the Second Amendment and then say that is where Congress gets its power. On that theory, the Supreme Court said in the *RFRA* case—striking down the Religious Freedom Restoration Act as it

applies to States—there would be no limit at all to Federal power, and that can't be right.

My friends celebrated yesterday having passed an unconstitutional bill—unconstitutional. We have no power to trample the handiwork of the States all over the country. The State legislatures have the power under the 10th Amendment, and Congress lacks the power in Article I to define what concealed carry policy is going to be in the States. That is up to the States.

So, if they want to become the absolute enemies of the State legislatures and State power and State rights, be my guest. But what they have is an unconstitutional piece of legislation as well as a deeply dangerous and ill-thought-out piece of legislation.

The last thing I want to say about it is, like almost everything else they bring to us now, there were no hearings on it.

Now, think about that. Here we are, one of the greatest legislative bodies on the planet Earth—Abraham Lincoln sat in this body; John F. Kennedy sat in this body; some of the greatest legislators who ever existed were here—and they are passing bills without so much as a single hearing. They just bring it up for a vote.

So we whip out our phones, and we are trying to google to find out about the issue. That is how I found out, for example, that more than 1,100 people carrying concealed carry weapons had committed homicides or mass shootings or killing of police or suicides—with their guns. And now they want open season.

If you want to allow anybody in your State to get a concealed carry weapon, be our guest. Don't impose that rule on the people of Maryland. We don't want it, thank you very much. We have already decided what we have got, and that is true of State legislatures all across the land.

□ 1800

Their so-called reciprocity legislation is actually a demolition of reciprocity, because lots of States have entered into reciprocal agreements that will be extinguished by their law.

So without so much as a hearing, without any real debate or discussion, without them even realizing that they are violating the Constitution, they go ahead and pass this law.

All right. But that, of course, is just a distraction from the main order of business this month, which is demolition of America's middle class. I am sorry to put it in such cogent and compressed terms, but there is no other way to describe what *The New York Times* calls the worst piece of tax legislation ever introduced in the history of our country.

Now, America has gotten the point about the GOP tax plan. People know it is highway robbery. People know it is a mugging of the working class and the middle class by the largest corporations and the richest people in the

country. They know it is an outrageous decision to drive the country into \$1.5 trillion more deficit, more debt, all to enrich the robber barons and the cyber barons of our time.

They want to cut corporate taxes from 35 percent to 20 percent at a time of record corporate profits.

Why? Why would you do that?

They say that if we bestow this extraordinary windfall, bonus present on corporate America, that somehow we are going to get more jobs out of it. But wait a second. We are at a time of record corporate profits right now. If all they needed was more profits, more dividends to create jobs, then we would be seeing them right now.

We are in a time of economic growth, and any economist you ask, who is not in the pay of the proponents, will tell you it is a deranged thing to cut corporate taxes at a time of record corporate profits.

Why would we do that?

They say it will lead to economic development. Nonsense. Show me one example where trickle-down economics has ever worked. It doesn't work, for a very simple reason. You give more money to the people at the top of society, they pocket it, they send it overseas to their Swiss bank accounts or to the Cayman Islands or more yachts. That is what they do with it.

If you want economic growth, you do what Franklin D. Roosevelt did. You invest in the middle class, you invest in working people.

Business growth comes from demand, and demand comes from a strong middle class that is able to buy stuff. If you starve the middle class, there is no demand. The rich take their money and they park it overseas. That is what our oligarchs do. That is what the Russian oligarchs do.

That is how Donald Trump has stayed in business. The Russian oligarchs have been renting out his condos and offices in the Trump Tower in New York and coming to the Trump Hotel. They have got their surplus profits they are exporting from Russia going right into the Trump enterprises. Our oligarchs do the exact same thing.

You want real growth, you want strong growth, you want fairness, you want a democratic society, you invest in the middle class, not the largest corporations, not the wealthiest people in the country.

Now, there is a strong link here to our campaign finance regime. Again, every public opinion poll shows Americans know it. You think you can fool the American people. You cannot fool the American people.

Americans know this tax bill is a great deal if you have your own lobbyist; it is a great deal if you have your own Political Action Committee; it is a great deal if you are in the Trump Cabinet, it is going to be perfect for you; and if your last name is Trump, this is absolute utopia. But if you don't have your own PAC, if you don't have your own lobbyist, watch out, watch out in this bill.

The Boston Globe's Annie Linskey had a great article with the title: "The Koch brothers (and their friends) want President Trump's tax cut. Very badly."

Tim Phillips, president of Americans for Prosperity, a Koch group, said: "It's the most significant Federal effort we've ever taken on."

Congratulations to the Koch brothers. They are about to get their own signature tax bill. All the GOP politicians are saying the same thing in the newspapers. You can just check it out.

They say the same thing: We are calling up the millionaires and billionaires for campaign contributions, and they say, "You deliver us that tax bill first. You get nothing from us until you deliver us that tax plan. You guys haven't done anything in Washington. You haven't thrown 30 or 40 million off their healthcare yet. We haven't gotten what we wanted. You deliver us that tax bill. That is what we want."

Of course, Trump's Cabinet needs no outside push even from the campaign donors. It is the wealthiest Cabinet in U.S. history.

Guess what it is worth. \$20 million? \$50 million? \$100 million? \$1 billion?

No. The Trump Cabinet is worth \$4.3 billion. \$4.3 billion is what their Cabinet is worth.

They all love the tax plan, and they should.

You know why?

They wrote it.

You know who they wrote it for?

Them.

Just like for the Trump family, they are going to abolish the estate tax, which applies to only 2 out of every 1,000 richest people in the country. It is only the wealthiest people who pay the estate tax now, and they want to wipe it out, costing the rest of us \$65 billion or \$70 billion.

They want to collide, they want to contradict, they want to trample an essential principle of America that our Founders started off with, which is opposition to hereditary government, like kings, and opposition to hereditary wealth, hereditary aristocracy. The Founders, like Ben Franklin and Tom Paine and Alexander Hamilton, they knew that the intergenerational transmission of huge fortunes was a threat to democracy.

At a certain point, people don't want to just buy a bigger house or another house or a third house or a fourth house or a yacht. At a certain point, they want to buy a governorship, they want to buy a U.S. Senate seat, they want to buy the Presidency of the United States.

So what is at stake here is not just whether we are going to have some semblance of fairness in the economy. It is bad enough that we have got one of the most unequal economies on Earth today. That is bad enough. They want a government that is plutocratic, a government that responds only to the wealthiest class in society.

So they want to abolish the estate tax. They want to abolish the alter-

native minimum tax. That is the only reason that Donald Trump paid any taxes at all in the one year that we know he paid any taxes in the last 2 decades, the alternative minimum tax. So of course they want to get rid of that.

For the middle class, well, no breaks there. They want to get rid of the college student loan interest deduction. If you are struggling to get into the middle class, to go to college, if you had a deduction on the college student loan interest: Gone. They don't want it.

Healthcare expenses. You spend more than 10 percent of your income on healthcare expenses, long-term care for someone in your family who has Alzheimer's disease; you have a kid in your family who has autism going into a private school for kids with special needs, right now you can deduct that. They want to get rid of that.

They want to get rid of the State and local tax deduction, which half of my communities use, targeted right at those States, like Maryland, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, California, and Illinois, that invest heavily in education and infrastructure. So they just want to get rid of that.

Here's something else, another snake writhing in the grass of this terrible bill. They want to repeal the Johnson amendment. This is named after Lyndon Johnson when he was a Senator. So we are taking you back to the 1950s and 1960s. It was a very simple amendment that is essentially a logical corollary to the First Amendment, to the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause. It says that 501(c)(3) organizations, churches, universities, not-for-profit entities cannot engage in political campaigning, in electioneering.

Guess what the Koch brothers and the Mercers have tucked into this one. They are going to get rid of the Johnson amendment. So the Koch brothers, if they want to spend \$1 billion trying to define American politics in the name of plutocracy, now it will be tax deductible. Right now, they can spend it under Citizens United, they can spend whatever they want, but they have got to pay for it.

Now they put it into a church or to churches, the "Church of the Golden Plutocracy," and then they can deduct it on their taxes and the church can now be involved in politics, it can spend money in politics, it can electioneer, it can endorse candidates for office, and it remains a tax-exempt entity.

Now, the smart churches, which is most churches, have opposed it. They said: Don't give us that power, because the next step is people are going to turn around and say, "Wait a second. Why are we getting tax deductible contributions in churches? Why are we tax exempt if we are getting involved in politics like everybody else?"

That will be the logical question. Indeed, it threatens the very existence of the 501(c)(3) organization by tearing down that wall over tax-exempt con-

tributions, which Sheldon Adelson and the Koch brothers and the Mercers want so badly. Very clever, their divine dark money loophole, very clever.

They are going to find a way that they can control our politics, deduct it from their taxes, and corrupt the entire not-for-profit sector, the churches and the synagogues and the mosques and so on.

I wish I could leave you with cheerier news tonight, but the U.S. Congress is on the verge of passing the worst tax proposal in American history that offends every value that we cherish in this country.

Why are the people who are pushing it, who are doing quadruple backflips in the middle of the night, hiding it from us?

It took us 2 years and 10 months to pass the 1986 bipartisan tax legislation. Here, this is behind the scenes in the dark, speed of light, dark of night, the whole thing.

Why are they willing to do it even though it is rejected now by 2-1 or 3-1 in every public opinion poll?

People understand it is highway robbery.

Why are they willing to do it?

Well, what is the worst that could happen to them?

Think about it. The worst that could happen to somebody who votes for this is they lose and they go to work for the Koch brothers, they go to work for the Mercers, they go to work for Sheldon Adelson, and the highway robbery is complete.

Now, popular protests stopped the plan to throw tens of millions of people off their healthcare. Despite the fact that the GOP controls the House, the Senate, the White House, and even the Supreme Court—they control all of it—yet popular protests around the country stopped it.

Mr. Speaker, that is the only thing that can stop us now, because so many of my colleagues across the aisle have decided to walk the plank for the Koch brothers and for the billionaire cabinet. They have decided to throw in with the oligarchs, the American oligarchs, and the plutocrats.

So popular protests, people speaking out and contacting their Members, will be our only hope of showing that this is an absolute insult and affront to American democracy; not just middle class economics, economics for everybody, but democratic politics; politics for everybody, not just the elite.

I thank the Speaker for granting us this opportunity to allow us to express our intense anxiety about what might happen next week. I wish the Speaker a good weekend. I hope that everyone will have the opportunity to consider the implications of what is taking place.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1815

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of big things going on. More things will be coming out. We have had an interesting day of it today.

Hopefully, the House and Senate—I think we are going to get a tax cut bill done. I think it is unfair to just call it a tax reform because it doesn't explain. We did tax cuts for everybody. We didn't change the percentage on the wealthiest Americans.

And I understand the thinking. Look, if we, as Republicans, change, we lower all the tax rates, then the Democrats will say: See, you're doing a big tax cut for the wealthy.

So I get it. But as the old saying in Washington goes: No matter how cynical you get, it's never enough to catch up; not in Washington.

Okay, so we didn't change the top percentage rate of tax on the wealthiest Americans. That is the only one we didn't change. And so what has happened?

Our friends across the aisle have said: See, this is a tax cut to help the rich. That is the one tax rate we didn't change, so it wouldn't have mattered.

I would love to have just seen—all right, we are getting rid of all of these tax rates. We are going to have one tax rate, and I would love it to be the tax rate that the Bible suggests in the synagogue or church; and that is 10 percent of your firstfruits. And why not 10 percent to the government after 10 percent of the firstfruits to the church or synagogue, if those are your religious beliefs?

Let's see. I forget which candidate, one of the candidates used to say: Hey, if 10 percent is good enough for God, why shouldn't it be good enough for the government?

But anyway, it was a nice thought. But we are still doing a little bit of social engineering by trying, apparently, in the tax bill, to give a lot of help to the folks who need it. There are some things that I hope will return.

I have heard from folks in my district, some accountants who have clients that, they do pay enough in medical expenses. If they don't get to deduct that, they are going to be bankrupt so, hopefully, that will be something that comes back and gets put in our version.

The last people we need to harm are the people who have got no other place to go. They are on Social Security, they are heading toward the end of life on this planet, and then the government stabs them in the back. I mean, that is what Bill Clinton did back in 1993. Not only did he put a tax on their Social Security in 1993, he made it retroactive. So it wasn't just taxing Social Security for the future, it made it

retroactive, and that was terribly tragic.

I wish we were making our tax cuts retroactive so that the working poor would get the help much quicker. But everybody in America is going to get some help with reduction, massive reduction of the largest tariff that any industrialized nation puts on its own goods when they are produced. It is called the corporate tax.

They make you think, oh, these greedy corporations, they are paying that tax. They don't pay that tax.

Just like Warren Barnett—Warren Buffett. Warren Barnett was a great trial lawyer. I don't know if he is still alive or not. I have heard him; he is an amazing guy, Democrat, amazing lawyer, really amazing trial lawyer.

But Warren Buffett, although he keeps saying publicly he wouldn't mind paying more taxes, his actions seem to indicate that they are paying massive amounts of money to lawyers to keep his company from paying the billions of dollars that I am told is owed. But anyway, we will see what happens there.

I am very hopeful that we are going to get a tax deal done, and we are going to bring it to the floor of this House, and we are going to pass it, and we will sing God bless KEVIN BRADY and the Ways and Means Committee, at least those who made it possible, made it happen. PAUL RYAN has been very helpful in moving that direction on the tax bill, so that will be a great thing if we can get it done.

I am also grateful to the chairman of the Judiciary Committee today for the hearing that he required that we have. We had the FBI Director, Director Wray, come over and testify in front of us, and I am optimistic, with Director Wray. Of course, I was optimistic with Director Comey when I first got to question him because I saw Comey, oh, this is great. Finally, we have gotten rid of Mueller and all the damage he has done to the FBI.

As I pointed out to Director Wray today, he took over a very weakened FBI from the one that he took over as FBI Director under Bush, because when Director Mueller took over as FBI Director—I have tried to figure out why he would do this, and the only thing I can figure is he wanted a bunch of young, "yes people" working for him; because it goes pretty common sense that people with the most experience are going to be in a position to tell you, as the new FBI Director, when you are choosing to go down a road that is going to create problems; because FBI agents who have been there for 25 years, like so many of ours were, had been, they are an oddity now, but that was because Mueller wanted young, fresh, saluting "yes men" who would salute the flag, salute him, and not be in a position to say: Well, Director, could I make a suggestion, sir? You know, we did exactly what you were suggesting back in 1996, or 1993, or 1988, or 1986. We did that back then, and here

is what happened. So if you would allow me, sir, I would recommend that we look at this, that, or the other.

Apparently, Director Mueller didn't want those kind of people in the FBI, so he started a 5-year, up-or-out program. So our thousands of FBI agents across the country, in the hundreds of offices that are apparently around—the 5-year, up-or-out program is basically this: if you are in a supervisory position anywhere in the world for 5 years, at the end of the 5 years, you either must get out of the FBI, or, the way it was interpreted by so many FBI agents, you are going to have to come ride a cubicle up here in Washington.

People all over the country and world who were working for the FBI said: I'm not taking my family to Washington, D.C., and, with all my training and experience, going to ride a cubicle somewhere. I need to be out protecting people, helping people.

As The Wall Street Journal pointed out in an article that wasn't—didn't seem like it was all that far into his 10 years—actually, it turned into 12, I believe, Director Mueller had, in devastating the FBI.

He made some huge mistakes, cost millions of dollars. Whether it was a software program, this program, that program, he had all these ideas, and there were plenty of people who had had enough experience in the different areas that, if he hadn't run them off, could have said: This is not a good idea, sir, if I could suggest—

He didn't want to hear from those people. He ran them off; thousands and thousands of years of law enforcement experience. He ran them off.

It would be interesting to see what the average age of the FBI agents were when he left, compared to when he started. And I realize, there are so many old goats that get long in the tooth, but you don't run them off because they are older. Those are some of the most valuable people you could have. The only reason you should run anybody off is if they have just been so cantankerous that it is a problem, they are not doing their job.

But he ran them off because they had been in a supervisory position for 5 years.

So you would see offices that had an agent in charge, 20, 25, 26 years of experience, and they would finish their 5 years and say: I'm getting out. I didn't want to get out. I wanted to serve my country, even though I make a lot less in the FBI. But you are forcing me out, so I will go make a whole lot more money. Wish I could still be here.

But FBI Director Mueller had other ideas. Director Mueller severely hampered the FBI. There was a lot of damage that was done. And perhaps if he hadn't run off so many good, experienced people, all those thousands and thousands of years of experience, perhaps there would have been more elder statesmen in the FBI when he was allowing FBI agents to manufacture, fabricate evidence, hide evidence, and just