

while it will be a star-studded event with various entertainers performing on the plaza, the biggest star of all is from State College, Pennsylvania: the Christmas tree.

The 75-foot-tall Norway spruce was chosen as the yuletide centerpiece. The 12-ton tree was trucked into Midtown Manhattan earlier this month from State College. Rockefeller Center's head gardener was visiting State College a few years ago for a high school football game. He saw the tree from the road and knocked on the homeowner Jason Perrin's door to ask about the spruce.

Mr. Perrin is a Penn State graduate who worked for the State College Area School District for 17 years. He believes the tree is about 80 years old.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to State College's tree playing a starring role in tonight's festivities. Merry Christmas.

WE NEED BIPARTISAN TAX REFORM

(Mr. KILDEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, look, I, like every Member in this House, recognize that we need to do something about taxes. We need bipartisan tax reform that actually works for everybody, but what the Senate passed through committee and what the House passed here a couple of weeks ago is not tax reform. It is a great big tax cut financed by middle class Americans and huge debt that will be passed on to our kids.

It is just not right. We shouldn't do this just to put points on the board. I mean, if we are going to get this right, we should do it in a bipartisan way, and many of us stand ready to do that.

What this shows—and the facts matter—is that every independent analysis, including our own analysis here in Congress that we have depended upon for years, shows that millions, tens of millions, over 80 million middle class Americans, will get a tax increase, all to finance massive tax cuts for billionaires and corporations, people at the very top of the economy.

This is a massive shift of wealth from hardworking Americans to people at the very top. We ought to do this right. We ought to do it right. We ought to stop this nonsense, go back to the process that we were elected to follow, and get this done in a way that is good for all Americans. This bill is not that.

THANKING DR. ROBERT MARTINO

(Mr. MCKINLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCKINLEY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor Dr. Robert Martino of Clarksburg, West Virginia.

In 2013, Dr. Martino began a unique program, generously providing one day of free dental services to local Active-Duty military and their families. He

wanted to give back to those who have sacrificed so much, and he has continued to do so each and every year, thereafter, and has spread this idea throughout his professional network.

This day of service has now swept across the Nation, with over 500 businesses now offering our soldiers everything from dental services to accounting. It has become known as Freedom Day.

But that isn't enough. I want to challenge more businesses to participate. Visit freedomday.usa.org to find out how to get involved.

Dr. Martino, thank you for the example you set for America. You are truly a great American.

CELEBRATING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALL NATIVE AMERICAN CODE TALKERS

(Mr. O'HALLERAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. O'HALLERAN. Mr. Speaker, Native American Heritage Month affords us the opportunity to honor the Native American veterans who fought for this great country.

I rise today to celebrate the indispensable contributions of all Native American code talkers. Throughout much of the 20th Century, Native American soldiers used their native languages to develop unbreakable codes for military operations. Their actions were critical for many Allied victories.

Every day, I am reminded of the contributions of the code talkers who served at Iwo Jima. A tribute to their service hangs in my office, and it contains this quote from Major Howard Connor, a signal officer for the Navajo code talkers: "Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines never would have taken Iwo Jima."

I want to extend my sincere thanks to all the brave code talkers who served with honor and our veterans.

One of the founding principles of this country is the celebration of the diversity of its people. When we recognize that, we truly are a more perfect union.

TAX RELIEF FOR SMALL BUSINESSES IN TEXAS

(Mr. MARCHANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, across America, was Small Business Saturday, a yearly event that highlights American Main Street businesses by encouraging consumers to shop in their local shops.

Forty-five percent of all companies in Texas are small businesses. They provide jobs to 4 million Texans. They are our neighbors, our family members, and our friends. They provide jobs to more than 4 million families as well as the 4 million Texans.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act provides small businesses in my north Texas

district with the lowest tax rate since World War II, allowing them to invest in their community, hire more people, and, as the National Federation of Independent Business says: This tax bill will lead small businesses into a better position.

We highlighted small businesses last weekend, and the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act follows through with a Tax Code built for increased wages and long-term growth.

□ 1215

TAX BILL IS A LOSS FOR AMERICANS

(Mr. HIMES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIMES. Mr. Speaker, I rise to mourn the lost opportunity for real bipartisan tax reform. There were lots of Democrats, Mr. Speaker, who were ready to make a deal to make our Code simpler and more competitive. There were lots of Democrats who would have said, yeah, let's lower rates, but let's do it responsibly so that we don't balloon the deficit. And there were lots of Democrats who said let's eliminate that incentive for companies to operate abroad.

But instead, we are where we are today, where we have a bill here and in the Senate that will raise taxes on millions of middle class Americans, that will deliver a huge windfall to the wealthiest Americans, and that will send a tsunami of cash to American corporations.

For what purpose?

American corporations, today, are swimming in cash. They are profitable like never before. There is this fantasy that they will hire more people, but let's actually listen to the corporations. Cisco, Pfizer, and Coca-Cola have said they will take this money and they will return it to shareholders as, quite frankly, they probably should, since it is shareholder money. It is not going to go to new jobs. And remember—this is the kicker—35 percent of shareholders of American corporations are foreigners.

This is not a win. This is a loss for the American people.

RECOGNIZING LUBBOCK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

(Mr. ARRINGTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce and congratulate them and their 2,000-plus members as they gather for their annual awards ceremony this week.

For over 100 years, the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce has brought these hardworking men and women together to better our community. Their commitment to excellence has earned them national recognition as America's first and only chamber to be two-

time, five-star accredited and twice named Chamber of the Year. And as we say in Texas: "That ain't braggin' if it's true."

I want to recognize a few of our hard-working business leaders who are being celebrated this week:

Ambassador of the Year, Danny Soliz;

Volunteer of the Year, Kathy Timms; Business Person of the Year, Chris Lonngren;

Business of the Year, Bayer Crop Science; and

Entrepreneur of the Year, Shara Konechney.

Congrats to all of these folks. Congrats to my friend, Eddie McBride.

Mr. Speaker, I thank them for their leadership, and thanks to all of our small businesses. They are the heartbeat of west Texas, Mr. Speaker.

BRING FORTH TAX REFORM THAT BENEFITS THE MIDDLE CLASS

(Ms. PINGREE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PINGREE. Mr. Speaker, I recently sat down with Mainers who are terrified of the Republican tax plan:

In tears, a high school teacher listed the items she purchased for her students in need. Under this plan, she will no longer be able to deduct them.

A cancer survivor told me how she now writes off thousands of dollars of medical expenses every year—no more, under the tax plan.

A recent college graduate wondered how difficult it would be to achieve his career goals while paying off his student loan debt without a deduction for the interest.

A dairy farmer talked about a tax exemption that has allowed farmers to have more control over their businesses by forming co-ops. That is gone under the GOP tax scam.

In 10 years, one in five Mainers will pay more in Federal taxes under this plan. Their sacrifices and our national debt will pay for generous benefits to massive corporations, foreign investors, and the wealthiest of the wealthy.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to withdraw this thinly veiled handout to the one-percenters and bring forth tax reform that will actually benefit the middle class.

HONORING CAREER OF LOURDES MELUZA

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the distinguished career of Lourdes Meluza, who has recently retired after 39 years in journalism.

As a native from my homeland of Cuba and a graduate from the University of Miami—Go Canes—my alma

mater, I got to know Lourdes as she began her tenure as a writer for the Miami Herald, where she covered my first election to the Florida State House of Representatives.

In 1987, Lourdes joined Miami's Univision station, and shortly after, she became the network's D.C. correspondent, reporting to millions of Hispanics in the U.S. about important policy issues being discussed in our Nation's Capital.

For over two decades, Lourdes interviewed Presidents and Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle and heads of state. Her professionalism has earned her our respect and admiration.

Lourdes will be enjoying her well-deserved retirement in Coral Gables, in my congressional district. Lourdes told me that she never considered journalism to be a career but, rather, an adventure.

Mr. Speaker, to my esteemed amiga, I wish her all the best in her next adventure, and I look forward to seeing her in our south Florida paradise.

Godspeed, Lourdes Meluza. Felicidades, amiga.

LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD ON TAX REFORM

(Mr. SCHRADER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHRADER. Mr. Speaker, a \$1.5 trillion deficit, that is what the so-called fiscally conservative Republican friends of mine want to add to our Nation's already huge debt, a debt they decry for many years, a debt that, according to former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Mike Mullen, is the greatest threat to our country in the coming decades.

There is really no need of that—none. We can do tax reform that better advantages the middle class and small businesses without adding \$1.5 trillion to our debt. By simply making the tax benefits fairer among income groups, you can have growth-enhancing, deficit-neutral tax reform with zero—yes, zero—addition to our debt and deficit.

If a 25 percent tax rate is good enough for small businesses, it should be good enough for corporations.

There is no need to eliminate the AMT for wealthy Americans earning over \$250,000 or completely eliminating the estate tax. Tweak it, and you can protect every small business and farm in America with a very progressive Tax Code.

Why should wealthy Americans get to deduct more expenses than working men and women? A 25 percent deduction for expenses levels the playing field for everyone.

Make these types of changes and you can get rid of the gimmicks in the Republican bill and benefit the middle class. There is no need to add \$1.5 trillion to our debt.

NOW IS THE TIME FOR TAX REFORM

(Mr. ALLEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the importance of comprehensive tax reform for our families and businesses.

It has been nearly 30 years since hardworking Americans have seen any significant changes made to our confusing Tax Code. Our current system is broken. I think we all agree on that. Taxes are too high, and our families and businesses are the ones paying the price, not to mention that nobody understands it.

Two weeks ago, I was proud to cast my vote to cut, simplify, and reform taxes, and now the ball is in the Senate's court. Thankfully, as of yesterday, legislation has passed both the Senate Finance Committee and the Senate Budget Committee, and now we expect a vote in the full Senate as early as this week.

Under the Trump administration, we are growing the economy, but nothing can compare to the effect that tax reform will have on jump-starting the economy, expanding small businesses, and creating jobs.

America, it is time to go back to work. We are now closer than ever to making tax reform a reality, a new reality for families and businesses across America who deserve to keep more of their paychecks and have the opportunity to grow their businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we will uphold our important promise to deliver tax reform legislation to President Trump's desk soon.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVERS MONTH

(Mr. LANGEVIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in recognition of National Family Caregivers Month. Caregivers are our Nation's hidden heroes. They foster family stability and help those with chronic and disabling conditions avoid costly out-of-home placements. In fact, family caregivers are very often the difference between costly institutional care or staying in their home.

Family caregivers not only deserve our respect and gratitude, but also respite from the physical and emotional toll of ensuring their loved ones receive the care that they need. But if the caregivers themselves aren't taking care of their own needs, they are not going to be very effective at taking care of their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, almost 44 million Americans are providing over \$470 billion in uncompensated care each year, if we had to put a dollar figure on it. These caregivers are our grandparents, parents, spouses, siblings, children, and