

Addressing the gaping hole in the current agriculture safety net for cotton and fixing other shortfalls and risk management for both crops and livestock will ensure a strong, viable agriculture sector for the United States and rural America.

Ultimately, we must maintain appropriate programs to mitigate against unforeseen global market changes and commodity prices, ensure against adverse weather events, and maintain access to credit so farmers across the country can continue to supply America with abundant and affordable sources of food.

Additionally, as Texas is the top cattle-producing State in the Nation and represents \$80 billion in annual cash receipts nationwide, maintaining key livestock disaster programs are equally important to a responsible and effective safety net for our ag producers.

Second, our rural communities need greater access to broadband communications to be viable in the modern era. Increasing access to broadband is fundamental to the survival of rural America. It is necessary to support critical infrastructure, such as healthcare and education, and for overall economic sustainability so that we can finally close the digital divide between rural and urban America.

Let me put it to you this way: no rural America; no food, fuel, and fiber for the American people.

Third, we need another generation of farmers and ranchers. The American agriculturist is facing tough times. The average age of a farmer is nearly 60 and the number of people involved in ag production in their thirties and forties continues to decrease dramatically, with less than 1 percent of the American population involved in ag production. The math doesn't look promising.

Operating expenses continue to rise and farmers, particularly the young ones, have less equity to finance their operations. Farmers of all ages need a dependable and flexible operating loan structure with loan amounts that are useful. We must work to ensure that the USDA has the flexibility it needs to extend credit in the most meaningful way.

Fourth, innovation makes it possible for the farmer and rancher to continue to operate. Ensuring adequate and equitable research funding for agriculture colleges across the country is key.

Let's not just pour all of our money into land-grant institutions just because they are land-grant institutions. Let's fund the best ideas. It is call meritocracy. That is what our country was founded on.

As former vice chancellor of research at Texas Tech University, I saw some of the best and most innovative ideas spawned from research go to market and make a difference for our economy and the quality of our lives.

Lastly, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program needs a more focused accountability. As we craft the

next farm bill, we should continue to monitor the effectiveness of all programs, especially SNAP, which accounts for 80 percent of all spending in the farm bill.

While the intent is well-meaning, the unintended consequence is an increase of recipients who are work-capable adults without dependents, accounting for nearly 30 percent of all recipients. It is imperative to require that able-bodied adults work in order to receive government assistance not just in SNAP, but all government programs.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, our farmers and ranchers are central to the vitality and security of this great Nation. This legislation is extremely critical to the success of our farmers. By including the priorities I have outlined today in the next farm bill, we can ensure a safer, stronger, freer America for our children.

TAX REFORM

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

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of efforts to simplify our outdated and overly complex Tax Code in order to make our economy more competitive and to provide big tax cuts to hardworking American families.

Last night, the House voted to go to conference with the Senate to work out differences between our two versions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. I am confident the conference committee will report a reconciled bill capable of passing both Chambers, because the American people need and deserve tax relief.

Make no mistake: no matter what the tired talking points are on the other side of the aisle, this legislation will be a tremendous benefit to middle- and lower-income Americans who have been hit hardest by the policies of the previous administration. This is a massive victory for low- and middle-income Americans.

But don't just take it from me. Let's review the facts.

The House bill takes the lowest 10 percent tax bracket to zero, and it doubles the standard deduction, meaning hardworking Americans can immediately take home more of their paychecks. Specifically, the first \$24,000 of family income will be completely tax free under this plan.

We are nearly doubling the child tax credit. The changes to all tax brackets means we are lowering taxes for low- and middle-income taxpayers even as we simplify the Tax Code and broaden the base.

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A study by the nonpartisan Tax Foundation found that, in Kentucky, this legislation will create 11,782 new full-time jobs and will increase take-home pay by \$1,724 by Kentucky households making the median income.

Not only will middle-income families be able to keep more of their paychecks, their paychecks will grow.

A letter signed by 137 economists last week, sent to all Members of the House and Senate, made the case that "a competitive corporate rate is the key to an economic engine driven by greater investment, capital stock, business formation, and productivity—all of which will yield more jobs and higher wages."

That is why these economists are urging us to make the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act law. They note that our current corporate tax rate of 35 percent, which is the highest in the industrialized world, has made America non-competitive, resulting in the loss of 4,700 companies to overseas competitors since 2004, lost jobs, and lost wages.

This analysis is confirmed by the Tax Foundation, which concludes that approximately 74 percent of corporate taxes are paid by workers in the form of lower wages. Let's give American workers a pay raise.

Reducing the corporate tax rate will ignite economic growth, allow jobs to return from overseas, increase new private sector jobs through greater investment, and increase paychecks. A win-win-win for middle class workers and those looking to get ahead.

Now, the ultimate irony is that if you actually wanted to help the wealthy and the well-connected, then you would vote against tax reform and you would keep the current Tax Code in place. It is a complicated mess of multiple brackets, high rates, and special interest loopholes. The Code is a haven for special interests, tax manipulators, and the well-connected. It is an impossible frustration for ordinary middle class Americans who need to comply with the Code to hire tax lawyers and accountants. So if you want to help the middle class, get rid of this complicated mess.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to respond to my friends on the other side of the aisle who after more than doubling the national debt during the Obama administration and who continue to push massive unpaid increases in spending, such as single-payer healthcare—government-run healthcare—have suddenly become gravely concerned about our national deficit and debt.

Now, let me be clear: I welcome this epiphany. I welcome their change of heart. I hope we can work together to actually address the true cost drivers of our deficit and debt. But last year, the Federal Government took in \$3.3 trillion in revenue. Our deficits are not the result of too little revenue. They are the result of Members of Congress who are unwilling to force the government to live within its means. We will never balance the budget or even think about paying down our debt without robust economic growth.

Those on the other side assume that a \$1.5 trillion tax cut will increase the debt by \$1.5 trillion. But that is based on the absurd assumption that nobody changes behavior when you get a tax

cut. It is based on the assumption that the economy is fixed. They are wrong because they don't account for the extra revenue that tax reform will generate by creating more taxpayers and higher paychecks.

As was noted by an analysis by the American Enterprise Institute and U.S. Policy Metrics: "If the economy grows an average of 2.6 percent, the Republican tax reform bill would not raise the deficit. If the economy grows faster than 2.6 percent, the deficit would actually fall."

It should be noted that in the last two consecutive quarters, the U.S. economy has grown at an annual rate of 3 percent or more. That is, in part, due to the increased confidence by businesses, consumers, investors, and entrepreneurs that we will indeed make good on our promise to complete tax reform this year.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues concerned about the deficit and the debt to join me in supporting the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act when this bill returns to the House floor so that we can ignite economic growth, create new jobs, and give American workers the pay increase that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, it is their money. Let's give it back to them.

RECOGNIZING STEVE HOGG

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. NORMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. NORMAN. Mr. Speaker, December is a special month. We celebrate the birth of Christ, but we are also celebrating a church in Rock Hill, South Carolina, that has done amazing things. It is a 30-year celebration for the First Baptist Church in Rock Hill, South Carolina. It is also celebrating a pastor that has stood the test of time. He has done amazing things at this church.

Let me tell you what has occurred over the past 30 years.

The church relocated in April 2004 to an 84,000-square-foot facility. It was 52 acres of land. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, when the First Baptist Church made that move, the land out there was a forest. You didn't see the shopping centers, you didn't see the fast food, you didn't see the service stations and the clothing stores that are there now. They took a chance on faith.

I remember when the board took that vote, it wasn't a simple majority. They had to have an 80 percent-plus in agreement of the board to locate there. If that is not democracy, I don't know what is.

The budget was \$490,000. It increased \$2,637,800.

They have had over 1,500 baptisms.

They sponsored the first African-American congregation for membership in the York Baptist Association in 1994.

They sponsored a second African-American congregation for member-

ship in the York Baptist Association in 2017.

Let me tell you about Pastor Hogg.

Pastor Hogg was born on January 14, 1958. He was born in Roxana, Kentucky. He was baptized and ordained in the First Baptist Church of Whitesburg, Kentucky. He has been pastor of the Bethel Baptist Church. He has been pastor of the Colson Baptist Mission. He has been the summer missionary at the First Baptist Church. And he has been the bus minister at the First Baptist Church in Kentucky.

Some of the honors and offices that he has devoted his time and talent to have been the South Carolina Baptist Convention, where he was president from 1993 to 1994. He was president of the Pastor's Conference. He was chairman of the United Christian Baccalaureate Planning Committee. He was on the Billy Graham Carolinas Crusade Executive Committee. He was a charter member of the city of Rock Hill No Room for Racism Committee.

Some of the new things he has started while at First Baptist Church in Rock Hill were the contemporary worship service, deaf ministry, women and men's ministries, television broadcasts of morning worship services, live streaming of worship services, Sunbeams Day School, and conducted eight capital fund campaigns.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on, but these 30 years are something to remember. It is something that ought to be a milestone for the church—and it is. If anybody has stood the test of time, it has been Steve Hogg and the First Baptist Church, and I commend the congregation. It is a great day for our State and it is a great day for America. God bless America.

CUBA AND BOLIVIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARR). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago, a human rights activist in my native homeland of Cuba, Jorge Luis Garcia Perez, better known as Antunez, was detained in Cuba on his way to the airport. Antunez was going to speak at an event hosted by Freedom House and Justice Cuba, right here in D.C., to educate the public on the brutal realities of what continues to occur every day in Cuba.

But, instead, Raúl Castro sent his thugs to detain Antunez and prevent him from boarding the plane. The regime promised Antunez that he could travel if he only "tempered his activism."

Mr. Speaker, anyone who knows Antunez, who spent many a year in Castro's jails, knows that he will not abandon his principles, nor should he ever be forced to do so.

As Antunez always says, "Ni me callo, ni me voy," which means, "I won't stay silent and I won't leave." He is talking about his activism in Cuba.

Mr. Speaker, the Castro regime wants to paint a picture that people on the island are free, that human rights abuses do not exist in Cuba, but we know better. That is why there continues to be, every day, arbitrary arrests and beatings to stop dissidents and activists from speaking out—that is the menu every day—reminding the world that what these activists want is freedom. That is really what transpires in Castro's Cuba for dissidents.

Our message to those brave fighters for freedom in Cuba must be that we are listening to their plight, that we will stand with them in opposing Castro's evil rule, and that we have not forgotten about them or their continued fight for freedom and democracy.

So I urge this administration to continue to undo the damage done by the previous administration and their failed policy toward Cuba. I urge the administration to offer unequivocal support for the brave Cuban people, like Antunez. They deserve our unwavering support, and they deserve our solidarity so that the people of Cuba achieve what they have been seeking for decades, and it is simple, Mr. Speaker: freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, respect for the rule of law, free and open markets, and liberty from communism.

Mr. Speaker, in Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, leftist dictators refuse to follow the rule of law, circumventing or ignoring completely their constitutions in order to maintain their hold in power. This practice has now spread to Bolivia, where strongman Evo Morales is taking a page from this playbook.

Less than 2 years ago, in 2016, Morales imposed a constitutional referendum to eliminate term limits for Presidents so that he could run for a third term.

But what happened in Bolivia?

The majority of the people said no. They went to the ballot box and they rejected this by a vote through a referendum.

What did Morales do?

He went to the court system that he has already rigged in his favor to seek the outcome that he desired. And, sure enough, his spineless cronies granted him his wish and approved his illegitimate run for a fourth term, agreeing that it was his human right—the only right, apparently, that is respected in Bolivia—to run for another term, ignoring completely the human rights of millions who voted to uphold their laws under their constitution.

The court's decision last week to lift constitutional limits on reelection should be disturbing to all of us and should serve as a wake-up call throughout the hemisphere. If we don't pay attention to Bolivia, it will soon become another Cuba or another Venezuela—failed states.

The decision to allow Morales to run for yet another term further erodes the democratic institutions in that country.

Sadly, this was not the first time that Morales or his thugs have chipped