more people, and not force those same job creators to waste time dealing with onerous rules and regulations that bear no relationship to public safety. With a like-minded President, we have been able to deliver some real relief to the American people.

One of the ways we have been able to do that is through a mechanism known as the Congressional Review Act. The Congressional Review Act was created to give Congress an opportunity to do away with regulations with which it disagrees. It allows Congress to act as a real check.

The problem with regulations is, it is really a substitute for lawmaking. Of course, when Congress acts and passes laws, the President signs them, and then we are held accountable by the voters for the laws we pass. That is not so when it comes to the bureaucracy that writes regulations. Bureaucrats don't stand for election. Bureaucrats are not accountable to the people. So that is why it is really important for us to have a mechanism like the Congressional Review Act to act as a check on runaway regulation.

By using this mechanism, the Congressional Review Act, with an ally in the White House, we have started undoing some of the thousands of burdensome rules and regulations created by the Obama administration—rules and regulations that add up to a hefty pricetag for our country. By one estimate, the costs of these Obama-era regulations add up to more than $1 trillion. That is a tremendous wet blanket on the American economy. If the job creators have to pay somebody to help them comply with these onerous rules and regulations, they obviously are not paying somebody to grow their business and to be productive. By one estimate, the cost of these Obama regulations adds up to more than $1 trillion and more than 700 million hours of paperwork, but fortunately we have been able to chip away at them by working with the White House and focusing on bringing regulatory relief to the American people.

Here is the tally so far. So far, we have been able to save the American economy $636 billion worth of regulatory relief. That adds up to 52 million hours of compliance time. Again, when somebody is busy complying with busy work mandated by a micromanaging Federal bureaucracy, they are not doing productive work.

Now, some of these rules and regulations are things that we may not read or hear about in the headlines or the evening news—things like the stream buffer rule, the Bureau of Land Management planning rule, and the Securities and Exchange Commission resource extraction rule. These are not well-known rules and regulations, but they have a real cost on the American economy. There is a real reason why, after the great recession of 2008, our economy has been bouncing along at about 2 percent real growth. That is not enough growth to keep hiring people as they come of age and become eligible to work in the workforce. We need the economy to grow faster, and one of the ways to do that is to relieve businesses and the economy of those overly onerous regulations.

As I was thinking about it, I think what has happened to our economy is, it has died a death of 1,000 cuts. Each of these regulations, while they seem rather innocuous, in and of themselves, or people don't know about them, have actually accumulated to cause real damage to the American economy. So we have been able to help those small businesses that would like to hire more people to do productive work, to grow the economy, and to help pay their employees better wages. We have helped them by repealing these regulations to help our job creators and not hurt them.

This has always been, to me, the mystery of Washington, DC. Back home in Texas, we look at the job creator as a positive influence on our economy, as somebody who is going to be creating a real opportunity for someone to find productive work and to pursue their dreams, but here in Washington so often the opposite seems to be true. It almost seemed like the attitude, particularly of the previous administration, was, What other obstacles can we put in the way of businesses? What other burdens can we impose upon the economy in the name of trying to micromanage the economy from Washington, DC? Well, I think what we have seen—the evidence is pretty clear—is anemic growth, and that is something we need to roll back, along with these rules and regulations.

I am hopeful the President will be signing more of these Congressional Review Act initiatives soon. So far, he has signed 13 of them, and we have more in the queue.

As we look ahead to big-ticket items we all want to make progress on, I am committed to continuing to work with all of our colleagues and the administration in doing all we can to help small businesses, family farmers, and entrepreneurs spend more time doing productive work and less time doing busy work mandated by the bureaucrats here in Washington, DC.

One of those big-ticket items is tax reform. We have seen some big ideas floated out there by the House of Representatives and last night and today by the President and his Cabinet as well. I look forward to reviewing the proposal the President has made.

There is no question there is a lot of room for reforming our Tax Code. Our Tax Code is literally a self-inflicted wound which damages our economy. We have trillions of dollars earned by American-based businesses earned overseas that they will not bring back because they don't want to be taxed twice on that money. We know our Tax Code is way too complicated. It is riddled with loopholes, inconsistencies, and provisions that impede job creation. Pro-growth tax reform should be our goal. It is something that has united Republicans and Democrats in the past, and there is no reason we shouldn't be united again in accomplishing that tax reform.

So I look forward to hearing more about the President's proposal, and I applaud him for making a bold statement about the direction we ought to pursue. Now is finally the time to address it.

All of these efforts—tax reform, rolling back unnecessary regulations and rules, and providing a better environment for businesses to thrive—are vital to getting our economy back on track and away from years of stagnant growth we saw under President Obama.

I should note it is hard to argue with how business-friendly policies—and the promise of more—affect the economy and create an atmosphere conducive to building businesses and helping families get by.

I think what we have seen is a resurgence of public confidence in the American economy. One index by Gallup suggests that business owners are now more optimistic than they have been since the summer of 2007. That is the kind of confidence and optimism that helps them grow their business and create opportunity for the working man and woman in our country, and it is a testament to the sea change we have seen over the last few months since the new administration came into office and the American people chose to retain Republican majorities in the House and the Senate. More family-run businesses are expecting us to keep putting forward policies that empower job creators, not to get in their way.

I know we have only seen the first few months of the new Congress and we have only seen the first few months of a new Presidential administration, but I am proud of what we have been able to accomplish so far; frankly, without much help from our friends across the aisle who have done everything they can to slow-walk nominations and otherwise impede progress. I hope they realize that is bad politics, and it is not serving the interests of the American people very well. Sooner or later, enough Democrats are going to say: We came here not to just say no to every constructive proposal made but actually participate in the legislative process and work for the benefit of the American people.

I look forward to doing even more to help those who want to bring more jobs and more economic growth to our communities across this great land.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Acosta nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of R. Alexander Acosta, of Florida, to be Secretary of Labor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 11:30 a.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as Senators continue to negotiate the appropriations bills this week, I want to reiterate my hopes that we can reach an agreement by this Friday. So long as we try to operate within the parameters our parties have operated under for the last few spending bills, I am optimistic about the chances for a deal.

I am glad the President has taken the wall off the table in the negotiations. Democrats have always been for border security. In fact, we supported one of the toughest border security packages in comprehensive immigration reform in an amendment offered by two of my Republican colleagues, Senator HOEVEN and Senator CORKER. We may address border security in this bill as well, but it will not include any funding for a wall, plain and simple.

Now, we still have a few issues to work out, including the issue of cost sharing, Puerto Rico, and getting permanent healthcare for miners, which I was glad to hear the majority leader voice support for yesterday—permanent healthcare for miners. I want to salute Senator MANCHIN, who has worked so long and hard for these poor miners who have struggled and have had hard, hard, hard lives. They shouldn't have their health benefits taken away. But above all, in the bill we have to make sure there are no poison pill riders. That has been a watchword of our negotiations in the past and is what led to success, and I hope both sides of the aisle will pursue that now.

We Democrats remain committed to fighting President Trump's cutback on women's health, a rollback of financial protections in Wall Street reform, rollbacks of protections for clean air and clean water, and against a deportation force. Those are the kinds of poison pill riders that could hurt an agreement, and I hope we will just decide at the given time that we can debate them in regular order, but they shouldn't hold the government hostage and pass them without debate.

THE PRESIDENT'S TAX PLAN

Mr. President, today we will also be hearing some details—we don't know how many—about the President's tax plan. We will take a look at what they are proposing, but I can tell you this: If the President's plan is to give a massive tax break to the very wealthy in this country—a plan that will mostly benefit people and businesses like President Trump's—that will not pass muster with Democrats.

The very wealthy are doing pretty well in America. Their incomes keep going up. Their wealth keeps going up. God bless them. Let them do well. But they don't need another huge tax break while middle-class Americans and those struggling to get there need help just staying afloat. It is already the case that CEOs and other folks at the top of the corporate ladder can use deductions and loopholes to pay less in taxes than their secretaries. We don't need a plan that establishes the same principle in the basic rates by allowing wealthy businessmen, like President Trump, to use passthrough entities to pay 15 percent in taxes while everyone else pays in the twenties and thirties. We don't need a tax plan that allows the very rich to use passthroughs to reduce their rates to 15 percent while average Americans are paying much more. That is not tax reform. That is just a tax giveaway to the very, very wealthy that will explode the deficit.

So we will take a look at what the President proposes later today. If it is just another deficit-busting tax break for the very wealthy, I predict their proposal will land with a dud with the American people.

NORTH KOREA

Mr. President, later today, the Senate will be receiving a briefing by the administration on the situation in North Korea. I look forward to the opportunity to hear from the Secretary of State, who I understand drafted the administration's plan, and other senior administration officials about their views on North Korea and the posture of the United States in that region.

I think what many of my colleagues hope to hear articulated is a coherent, well-thought-out, strategic plan. So far, Congress and the American public have heard very little in the way of strategy with respect to North Korea. We have heard very little about strategy to combat ISIS. We have heard very little about a strategy on how to deal with Putin's Russia. We have heard very little about our strategy in Syria. Only a few weeks ago, the President authorized a strike in Syria. Is there a broader strategy? Does the administration support regime change or not? Do they plan further U.S. involvement?

These are difficult and important questions, and there are many more of them to be asked and answered about this administration's nascent national security policy for hotspots around the globe. I hope that later today, at least in relation to North Korea, we Senators are given a serious, well-considered outline of the administration's strategic goals in the Korean peninsula and their plans to achieve them.

THE PRESIDENT'S FIRST ONE HUNDRED DAYS

Mr. President, as we approach the 100-day mark of the Trump administration, we Democrats have been highlighting the litany of broken and unfulfilled promises that President Trump made to working families. It is our job as the minority party to hold the President accountable to the promises he made to voters, particularly the ones he made to working families who are struggling out there. Many of these folks voted for the President because they believed him when he promised to bring back their jobs or get tougher on trade or drain the swamp. So it is important to point out where the President has gone back on his word and where he has fallen short in these first 100 days.

On the crucial issues of jobs and the economy, this President has made little progress in 100 days. His party hasn't introduced a major job-creating piece of legislation to date, and he has actually backtracked on his promises to get tough on trade and outsourcing, two things which have cost our country millions of jobs. I was particularly upset to see the President consider repealing President Obama's law that prevented corporate inversions that allowed big corporations to locate overseas to lower their tax rates.

Instead of draining the swamp and making the government more accountable to the people, President Trump has filled his government with billionaires and bankers and folks ladened with conflicts of interest. Amazingly enough, he was going to clean up Washington and make it transparent. The White House has decided to keep the visitor log secret and, even worse, allowed waivers to lobbyists to come to work at the White House on the very same issues they were just lobbying on, and those waivers are kept secret. We will not even know about them.

These reversals aren't the normal adjustments that a President makes when transitioning from a campaign to the reality of government; these are stunning about-faces on core promises the President made to working Americans.

TRUMPCARE

Mr. President, I would like to focus now on one issue: the President's promises on healthcare. On the campaign trail, the President vowed to the American people that he would repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act with better healthcare that lowered costs, provided more generous coverage, and guaranteed insurance for everyone, with no changes to Medicare whatsoever. That is what he said. We are not saying this; he said that. Those are his words: I am going to cover everybody. He said, "We're going to have insurance for everybody . . . much less expensive and much better."

"We're going to have insurance for everybody." But once in office, President Trump broke each and every one of these promises with the rollout of his healthcare bill, TrumpCare. Did