

opportunities and will be better positioned to actually get ahead.

It has been over three decades since we passed comprehensive tax reform, and it is past time we do something about it. Fortunately, we now have an administration that shares this interest in finally improving our tax system instead of making it even more convoluted and constricting—and without demanding \$1 trillion in new taxes for the government.

Easing the burden on the middle class and getting the economy moving again are top concerns here in the Republican Senate. We understand that for the past 8 years, too many families struggled under the weight of an economy that failed to reach its potential, too many took home wages that didn't meet their needs, and too many saw opportunity slip away. We understand that these families deserve a change in direction and expect each of us to do what we can to get the economy moving again soon. That is why we passed legislation to provide relief from Obama-era regulations that stifle growth, and it is why we will keep working to advance more legislative solutions to help hard-working Americans. Tax reform is one way we can do just that.

This is an area where Republicans and Democrats have been able to find some common ground in the past, and I am hopeful our friends across the aisle will join us in working toward comprehensive tax reform one more time. Either way, the Republican Senate remains committed to enacting tax reform so we can help encourage American investment, boost job creation, and promote wage growth all across our country.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### 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 Sullivan nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of John J. Sullivan, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of State.

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

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 54, Courtney Elwood to be General Counsel of the CIA.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Courtney Elwood, of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Courtney Elwood, of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Mitch McConnell, John Barrasso, Mike Crapo, Jerry Moran, Michael B. Enzi, James M. Inhofe, Richard Burr, Roger F. Wicker, Pat Roberts, Shelley Moore Capito, Thom Tillis, Orrin G. Hatch, Marco Rubio, John Boozman, John Cornyn, John Hoeven, James E. Risch.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the cloture motion be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume consideration of the Sullivan nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

If no one yields time, the time will be charged equally to the two sides.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### MANCHESTER ATTACK

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, the Senate's thoughts and prayers go out to everyone in Manchester, England. Such violence is particularly heartbreaking when it happens, as it did in Manchester, at a concert with so many young people there to enjoy.

We mourn the families of the victims of last night's terrorist attack. We hope the perpetrators are quickly found and brought to justice. I saw on TV a mother waiting, trying to email and text her daughter. She got no answer. She was wondering where her daughter was. It brought back the horrible memories for me after 9/11, the day after, when I went up there and saw hundreds of people holding up signs: "Have you seen my wife Evelyn?" "Have you seen my son John," not knowing if they were alive or dead. Most of them ended up being dead.

We hope and pray that mother, and all the other mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters who are waiting for news that maybe their child, their relative, is alive, will find them alive. Our prayers go out to them.

#### RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. President, now, on another matter completely, last night, it was reported in the Washington Post that President Trump attempted to enlist the Director of National Intelligence, Dan Coats, and the Director of the National Security Agency, Admiral Rogers, in helping the administration push back against reports in the press about an investigation into the President's campaign and its potential ties to Russia.

According to the same reporting, White House staff may also have "sounded out top intelligence officials about the possibility of intervening directly" with the FBI and Mr. Comey to get them to drop the investigation into General Flynn.

If these reports are accurate, it is another piece of now-mounting evidence that this White House has no interest—no interest—in allowing the Russia investigation to proceed without partisan interference, and the White House seems to have little respect for the principles of the rule of law. We have not quite seen anything like it in a very long time.

Such allegations only reinforce the correctness of the decision to appoint Special Counsel Mueller to oversee the investigation and should strengthen our resolve to ensure that he is insulated from interference from this White House. Such allegations also strengthen, again, the need for an independent, nonpartisan FBI Director.

With all these reports of attempts to interfere with the investigation, we cannot have an FBI Director who has a political background, who doesn't seem right down the middle, who doesn't

seem to be a Director's Director, a prosecutor's prosecutor, an investigator's investigator. No politician or candidate with insufficient impartiality should be selected by the President or confirmed by the Senate. We Democrats will stand very strongly for that.

Given the almost daily reports about potential meddling and misconduct by this administration, Congress must exercise its oversight authority in order to keep this administration in check. Both the executive branch and the congressional investigations must proceed. This is not about politics or political advantage. When a foreign power, particularly an enemy of our country like Putin and Russia, tries to interfere in your elections—and will probably do it again in the future—we have to know everything that happened, who participated, and make sure it doesn't happen again.

If people who participated in it—if there are such people—get away with it this time, many more will do it next time. So this is an issue of national interest, national security, and even the future of our democracy. I remind colleagues that in our Constitution, the Founding Fathers worried about foreign interference in our government. When I read that in high school and again in college, I said: Well, that doesn't seem real. It is all too real today, showing both the wisdom of the Founding Fathers and the need for strong oversight.

#### THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Mr. President, now, on the budget, today, the President will release his full budget for fiscal year 2018. From all indications, the Trump budget will seek deep cuts to programs that help the middle class and working America while providing more handouts to the rich. It will cut to the bone programs that help the elderly, the poor, while adding money for an unnecessary, ineffective border wall that continues to have bipartisan opposition.

To make all the math work, the Trump budget makes entirely unfounded assumptions about economic growth. In short, the Trump budget takes a sledgehammer to the middle class and the working poor, lavishes tax breaks on the wealthy, and imagines all of the deficit problems away with fantasy math. The Trump budget exists somewhere over the rainbow, where the dreams of Nick Mulvaney, PAUL RYAN, and the Koch brothers really do come true.

Of course, these dreams are a nightmare for the average working American. We expect the Trump budget will make deep cuts to the National Institutes of Health and Centers for Disease Control. Let me ask, How many people in America want to cut cancer research when it has done such good? Well, President Trump evidently does. It is his budget.

They kneecap research that develops new cures, damaging our ability to contain or prevent the outbreak of disease. We are all living longer and

healthier, in part because of this research. We want to stop it, cut it back, so we can give tax breaks to wealthy people who, God bless them, are doing great already?

We expect the Trump budget will gash programs like Meals on Wheels. I even read in the paper this morning that the head of the Freedom Caucus said that even for him some of these cuts were too great. The SNAP benefits, making sure no kid goes to bed hungry in America—this is America. We have always done this. The Children's Health Insurance Program, cruelly ripping away the lifelines from Americans who need it the most, the children, the working poor, the elderly.

We expect the Trump budget will cut transportation funding, education funding, and programs that help students repay their student loan debt. One of the great problems in America, the debt on the backs—the burden on average kids getting out of college, middle-class kids, we are going to make it harder? What is going on here? What is going on in the White House with this kind of budget?

Our college kids, when they get out, they need to be able to live real good lives and not have this burden of debt on their shoulders which they are struggling under now. We are going to make it worse. We also—it is amazing but true. The Trump budget will break President Trump's promise to protect Social Security and Medicaid from cuts, both of these. He promised over and over again he would not cut Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

Medicare was not cut here, but Medicaid is and Social Security is. On Social Security, the budget will cut Social Security disability benefits to many Americans who have earned them and paid for those benefits. You can say: Well, it doesn't cut old-age benefits for the elderly. Wait. If they get away with this, the elderly will be next on the chopping block because the goal, it seems, of this budget is to cut everything you can so you can give even more tax breaks to the wealthiest people—the Koch brothers type of thinking.

It will also seek hundreds of billions of dollars—additional cuts—in Medicaid. The budget cuts Medicaid on top of the cuts that were made in the House bill for TrumpCare. What will that do? Medicaid has become a middle-class program. For sixty percent of the people in nursing homes, Medicaid funds it.

What are we going to tell a couple with three kids? Say, they are 40 or 45. They have three kids. They are saving for college, they are struggling, but at least they know that mom or dad, who needs help, is in a nursing home. If this budget passes, that family is going to have a terrible choice: Take hundreds of dollars a month out of their own budget and give it to pay for the nursing home or find a place for mom and dad to live, maybe at home. Maybe there is no room in the house. It is awful. That is what they are doing.

What else will it hurt? Opioid addiction. Much of the progress we are trying to make on opioid addiction comes through Medicaid because they give treatment. We need law enforcement—I am a tough law enforcement guy; you know that—but we also need treatment. I have had fathers cry in my arms because their sons—in this case, it was both sons—were waiting online for treatment and died of an overdose. What a burden a parent has to live with. We should cut that and cut it to give more tax breaks to the rich? It is an America turned upside down—this budget.

How about rural areas? I represent New York State. It is known for its big city, New York City. We have other great cities upstate, but we also have the third largest rural population in America. So I am very familiar with rural America. In many of my counties in upstate New York—and this is true in rural counties throughout America—the largest employer is the rural hospital. That hospital is the only hospital around for miles and miles and miles if, God forbid, you have a stroke and you have to be rushed there to get better.

Well, go talk to our rural hospitals. These rural hospitals are the beating heart of our local economy, employing hundreds, sometimes even thousands, of people. Well, nearly one in three rural hospitals today is at risk of closure. It is more expensive to run a rural hospital. People in rural areas are entitled to the same healthcare, so that means buying all these fancy machines. In an urban area, those machines can run 24/7 and get the reimbursement back, but in a rural area they can't. There are not that many people, but they get some help.

The Trump cuts to Medicaid would cause a whole bunch of these rural hospitals to close and many more to lay off employees, hurting healthcare in rural America, and hurting jobs in rural America—places that need help.

The Trump budget on top of TrumpCare, which seeks more than \$800 billion in cuts to Medicaid, would decimate healthcare options for rural Americans and pull the plug on many of these rural hospitals. Some of my colleagues will be talking more about that this morning.

When you add all of it up, the Trump budget is comic-book-villain bad. Just like comic books, it relies on a fantasy to make all the numbers work. It is the kind of budget you might expect from someone who is openly rooting for a government shutdown. Haven't we heard the President say that? It is the latest example of the President breaking his promises to working Americans. This budget breaks promise after promise after promise that the President made to what he called the forgotten America, the working men and women of America. He said that he would help them, and this budget goes directly against them.

In his speech to Congress, for instance, earlier this year the President