

century poster child for radical environmental activism. Two fires blazed on the very lands that were set to be managed had it not been for these radical environmentalists. This is wrong.

We need litigation relief. We need to reform the process that our land managers go through to get these projects done. The National Environmental Policy Act—NEPA—was established to provide guidance for land managers to analyze all project alternatives and allow for public comment. This process has become so bogged down with additional steps and litigation that projects now at times take years to get through it. Others never even make it.

When it takes this long to analyze whether to even start a project, the forests continue to get more and more overstocked, more and more littered with fuels. A forest is a renewable resource, but if we do not manage the forests, they become unhealthy. They become prone to wildfire. Something needs to be done to streamline the process while allowing more collaboration between stakeholders. We can't wait any longer.

We need our colleagues to come to the table because we need comprehensive forest management reform. How many more thousands of acres in Montana and all over the West must burn before we act? Tying the hands of the State, tying the hands of the local communities, tying the hands of the people of Montana who best know how to manage these lands has not served us well. We need to change course.

I will work with anyone of any party and at all levels of our government to ensure that forests are managed in a way that reduces the severity of wildfires because Montanans deserve it, and because, quite frankly, it makes sense. Montanans are tired of seeing and breathing the smoke. The fire-fighters risking their lives out there deserve it as well.

Here is the bottom line. Either we are going to manage the forests or the forests are going to manage us. It is time to put the loggers of Montana back to work. I urge my colleagues to join me in this effort.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

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#### WILDFIRES, HURRICANES HARVEY AND IRMA, AND HEALTHCARE REFORM

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, over the last several weeks I have spent a lot of time traveling around my home State of Wyoming, and the Presiding Officer may have in his home State of Arkansas as well. We all do. We talk to a lot of people and hear from a lot of people as we travel around to the rodeos, the fairs, and the parades.

One of the things I have been hearing more and more about because I am seeing it daily in Wyoming—I know both Senator DAINES and Senator TESTER, both Senators from Montana have talked about it—has been the incred-

ible forest fires that have been raging in the West. There are more than 1 million acres of land burning in the West. Smoke is spreading all around the West, certainly in Wyoming—fire as well as smoke—impacting people, impacting land, impacting the soil, air, water, and impacting life, as well as property.

The damage that is happening is dramatic, and in many ways it is similar to the kinds of comprehensive damage and destruction we are seeing with the big storms hitting, like Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, which is on its way to Florida. These are incredible storms, and the people of Wyoming want to express and share their sympathy for the people who have lost family members, who have lost property, and those who are still in danger. We also know in Wyoming that people are wanting to volunteer, wanting to go to help by collecting food, supplies, clothing, taking up collections, as well, in churches, schools, and communities because that is the American spirit.

Today I come to the floor to express my admiration for the resilience of the people of the West, as well as the resilience of the people of Texas, Louisiana, and all Americans who are today dealing with the disasters they are facing in their homes.

The other things I heard a lot about—and this will not surprise us—are the concerns still out there regarding the Obama healthcare law. A lot of people in the media seem to think the discussion about that healthcare law is over. I can tell you, for the people of Wyoming, they are still very concerned about what we are seeing in terms of the collapse of the healthcare system, fewer choices, and higher prices. For them, the conversation is not over, and they want to make sure it is not over in Congress either. ObamaCare is still failing, and the American people are certainly still suffering, so we need to do something about it. We need to act.

There was an article by the Associated Press in the paper on Monday that summed up the situation. The headline was “Millions who buy health insurance brace for sharp increases.”

The article goes on to say: “Millions of people who buy individual health insurance policies and get no financial help from the Affordable Care Act are bracing for another year of double-digit premium increases, and their frustration is boiling over.”

The article says that these are mostly middle-class folks—hard-working people who may be self-employed or work for small businesses that can't afford to offer insurance. It goes on to say that these millions of Americans “pay full freight and bear the brunt of market problems such as high costs and diminished competition.”

That is the exact situation people are facing in Wyoming, and I assume in the Acting President pro tempore's home State of Arkansas as well.

The ObamaCare exchange in my State has only one company selling in-

surance. It wasn't supposed to happen that way. Democrats in Congress who supported the healthcare law said that it was going to create more competition and would bring down the prices and costs for families. In September of 2009, President Obama said that “without competition, the price of insurance goes up and quality goes down.”

So what is the situation now? All summer long we have heard about insurers who are giving up, pulling back, and dropping out. Millions of Americans will have fewer choices when it comes to their health insurance plans and opportunities in 2018.

On August 24, the largest hospital system in New York State announced that it was going to stop selling an ObamaCare insurance plan it had launched just 4 years ago. This is the home State of the Democratic leader in the Senate, someone who has come to the floor supporting the healthcare law.

The company is blaming the flaws in the Obamacare law and the fact that we haven't been able to do the reforms we need to do. Things I proposed and things that make sense to me—the Democratic leader will not allow us to address the many, many flaws of ObamaCare. Meanwhile, the people of his home State of New York are losing another option to get the coverage ObamaCare requires by law for them to have.

They are not alone. People living in 47 percent of all counties will have only one option for coverage next year, so millions of Americans are stuck in an insurance monopoly under ObamaCare.

Monday was the deadline for insurance companies to say what they will need to charge next year. People across the country continue to be very worried about how much more expensive their health insurance will be.

The lack of competition is one reason for the skyrocketing prices, but other big reasons for the increase in prices are actually the tax increases that were put in place when ObamaCare was passed. The healthcare law included \$1 trillion in new taxes.

One of the biggest ones hitting hard-working families is a tax on every health insurance plan that gets sold. It is called the health insurance tax. There was a new study last month that found this tax is going to raise prices by about \$500 per family next year.

The tax alone is raising the cost \$500 per family next year. That is just to pay for one of the taxes. Republicans want to get rid of the tax. That was part of our repeal-and-replace plan.

Every Democrat voted no—voted no—to removing the taxes, so premiums are continuing to soar because the healthcare law is unsustainable, and the taxes are unbearable for hard-working families. We have to do something to help people and to reverse the damage caused by ObamaCare.

I voted for the repeal legislation in July, and I am going to continue to work to replace ObamaCare. But until

that happens, I am glad to see the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is looking into other ways we can make changes to ObamaCare. The committee is working on ways to stabilize the individual market for next year. They are going to hear from Governors and State insurance commissioners about giving States more flexibility in dealing with some of the healthcare law's mandates. The committee is also going to be listening to doctors and to patients.

When I talk to doctors and nurses and patients back home in Wyoming, they tell me that the healthcare system we have now under ObamaCare isn't working. I see it every day. What I hear and what I see when I visit the hospitals and when I go back to my old medical office is that we need to replace it with something that actually makes healthcare more affordable. That was a big part of the Republican reform effort: Let the States do what works for their State and for the people who live there.

The Obama healthcare law is still hurting Americans. It is not getting better on its own. It is up to us in Congress to do all we can to help Americans who have been trapped in the ObamaCare death spiral.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota.

#### TAX REFORM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, it is no surprise that Americans consistently rate jobs and the economy as top issues of concern.

A recent survey found that 50 percent of voters consider themselves to be living paycheck to paycheck, and about one-third of voters say they are just about \$400 away from a financial crisis. That means a single, unexpected car repair or healthcare bill could easily put them in the middle of a financial emergency.

Too many Americans have seen their American dream dim in recent years. Hopes for a secure future have turned into worries about where the next rent or mortgage payment is coming from or whether it will be possible to save anything at all for retirement.

We don't have to resign ourselves to the status quo. We don't have to accept the long-term economic stagnation of the Obama administration as our economic future. We can get our economy going again, and we can set it up for strong growth for the long term. But that is going to require some work. It is going to require repealing burdensome and unnecessary government regulations that have slowed economic growth, and it is going to require reforming our complex, outdated Tax Code, which is increasingly strangling our economy.

The Tax Code might not be the first thing people think of when they think of economic growth, but it actually plays a huge role in every aspect of our

economy. It helps determine how much money Americans have left over from their paychecks to save or invest or whether they can afford a car or a house. When it comes to businesses, it can be the key to determining whether a young business gets off the ground or an existing business has the money to grow and hire new employees.

Unfortunately, our current Tax Code is not helping our economy. It is doing the opposite. It limits Americans' opportunities. It punishes their success. It discourages investment and growth. It cripples small businesses. It encourages large businesses to send jobs overseas. It keeps our economy from reaching its full potential.

Reforming our Tax Code is an indispensable part of getting our economy back on the path to long-term health. Without comprehensive tax reform, the economic stagnation of the Obama years is likely to become the status quo going forward.

This fall, Republicans in the House and Senate are going to make comprehensive tax reform a priority, and any legislation we pass will be governed by five principles: First, any bill has to result in increased wages, jobs, and economic growth. Second, it must provide tax relief for the middle class. Third, it has to keep jobs here at home. Fourth, it has to increase American competitiveness in the global economy. Finally, it has to simplify the Tax Code.

Republicans will be talking a lot about these principles over the coming weeks, but today I would like to take just a few minutes to talk about the first of these principles: making sure that tax reform legislation increases wages, jobs, and economic growth.

Flattening wage growth has been a problem in the United States for decades. During the 8 years of the Obama administration, wage growth was almost nonexistent.

Economic growth was also weak throughout the Obama administration. During the last year of the Obama administration—years, I might add, after the recession ended—economic growth was averaging a dismal 1.5 percent. That is barely half of the growth needed for a healthy economy or for what we have seen historically in this country, going back to the end of World War II.

While things have been looking up a little bit lately, we still have a long way to go to get back on the right track. Things need to get better, and they need to get better faster. We want things to get better for the long term. During the Obama administration, there were periods of reasonable economic growth, but they were quickly followed by weak periods.

That is not good enough. We need to put our economy on a strong, healthy footing for the long term. What does the Tax Code have to do with all of this? How is it discouraging wage growth, job growth, and economic growth?

I want to talk about three big ways it is discouraging growth. To start with, tax rates on businesses, large and small, are too high. Our Nation has the highest corporate tax rate in the industrialized world—at least 10 percentage points higher than the majority of our international competitors. Small businesses face tax rates that can range even higher—up to 44.6 percent for small businesses.

It doesn't take an economist to realize that high tax rates leave businesses with less money to invest, less money to spend on wages, less money to create new jobs, and less money to put back into new property or equipment for their businesses.

This situation is compounded when you are an American business with international competitors that are paying a lot less in taxes than you are. It is no surprise that U.S. businesses struggling to stay competitive in the global economy don't have a lot of resources to devote to creating new jobs and increasing wages.

On top of our high business tax rates, there is another major problem with our Tax Code that puts American businesses at a competitive disadvantage globally—our outdated worldwide tax system.

What does it mean to have a worldwide tax system? It means that American companies pay U.S. taxes on the profit they make here at home, as well as on any profit they make abroad once they bring that money home to the United States.

The problem with this is twofold. First, these companies are already paying taxes to foreign governments on the money they make abroad. Then, when they bring that money home, they end up having to pay taxes again on at least part of those profits and at the highest tax rate in the industrialized world. This discourages them from bringing their profits back to the United States to invest in their domestic operations. Instead, our Tax Code gives them a strong incentive to leave that money abroad and to invest in foreign workers and foreign economies.

The other problem is that most other major world economies have shifted from a worldwide tax system to what is known as a territorial tax system. In a territorial tax system, you pay taxes on the money that you earn where you make it and only there. You aren't taxed again when you bring money back to your home country.

Most of American companies' foreign competitors have been operating under a territorial tax system for years. So they are paying a lot less in taxes on the money they make abroad than American companies are. That leaves American companies at a disadvantage. These foreign companies can underbid American companies for new business simply because they don't have to add as much in taxes into the price of their products or services.

In addition to discouraging growth with high tax rates and with our outdated worldwide tax system, there is