

We should learn a lesson from that. The lesson we should learn is that tax reform, which also has an incredibly wide-reaching impact on our economy and on our country, should go through the regular order of debate. It is very alarming to see that, as of now, it appears that the process on tax reform is going to go through the same short-circuited effort as we saw with respect to healthcare, because what we have seen is that the Senate Budget Committee, on which I am proud to serve, will soon—maybe as early as next week—be taking up a budget bill that will include what are known as budget reconciliation instructions, which would provide for a tax cut that would be deficit-financed. What does that mean? It means that we would be cutting taxes and not paying for them. We would be cutting taxes and putting it on the American credit card and, as a result, dramatically increasing our debt. In fact, the reports indicate that the proposal will actually green-light a \$1.5 trillion increase in the Federal deficit.

Now, I have heard our Republican colleagues in the House and in the Senate for years talk about the fact that the debt is a huge burden overhanging on our economy. The debt is a big problem, and we need to deal with it. In fact, a few months ago, Leader McConnell said that any tax overhaul plan would “have to be revenue-neutral” because of the “alarming \$20 trillion Federal debt.” Yet, just months after that statement, we are told that we are probably going to get a proposal that would actually green-light—open the door—to increasing the Federal debt by \$1.5 trillion in order to provide a tax cut.

Now, the Democrats have put forward some principles for tax reform that I believe reflect the views of the American public. What we have said is this. No. 1, tax reform should be there to help the middle class and working families with some relief, and we should not be providing millionaires in the top 1 percent with yet another tax cut windfall. That should not be the priority of the country. In fact, Secretary Mnuchin, when he was testifying during his confirmation hearings, put forward something that we called the Mnuchin rule, which said that there should be no net tax cut for the very wealthy. So we have adopted that as one of our principles for tax reform.

We have also said what Leader McConnell said a few months ago, that tax reform should not add to the deficit and debt. We shouldn’t pass that burden on to taxpayers and future generations to pay the interest on that debt.

Finally, we have said that it should go through the regular order, as Senator McCain indicated, where we have that debate in an open forum so that everybody can understand the impact and have their say before people try to rush it through the Senate in a short period of time. So I hope that is what

we will do. These reports that we are talking about short-circuiting the process are alarming.

Then, we just heard within the last few days that, in addition to creating a process that would fast-track tax cuts that could go overwhelmingly to the wealthy and add to our deficit, this reconciliation bill will be written in a way that might allow us to try to fast-track the destruction of the Affordable Care Act again. We have finished this debate for this fiscal year, but suggestions are that it will open the door to destroying the Affordable Care Act through that fast-track, so-called reconciliation process in the months ahead.

So we would have in one piece of legislation a proposal that says: Let’s cut taxes for very wealthy people, and it will add to the deficit, but we are also going to try to reduce the deficit a little bit by cutting healthcare for millions of Americans.

We thought we just had that debate, and we thought the American public just weighed in on that debate. The result of the American public’s weighing in was very clear, and that is why we are not voting on that this week in the Senate. We should not open the door again to that kind of fast-track process that could do such grave harm to the healthcare of the American people.

So I hope that when it comes to tax reform, we will take a different path. As I indicated, there are things we can and should do to simplify our Tax Code. What we should not do is what we have seen in the past. What we saw in the past in the early 2000s was this fast-track procedure used to pass tax cuts that went overwhelmingly to the wealthiest Americans. In fact, after that tax cut was put in place, what went up was the income of the top 1 percent. What went up was the deficit and the debt, and everybody else was left flat or sinking. So that would be a terrible mistake.

For example, we are told that part of this will be eliminating entirely the so-called estate tax. Right now, the estate tax only applies to estates over \$11 million, for couples—over \$11 million. So 0.2 percent of Americans are impacted by the estate tax, and they are the wealthiest of the very wealthy. Yet this proposal says we are going to actually increase the debt by \$1.5 trillion in order to make room for tax cuts that benefit the top two-tenths of 1 percent of the American public.

That is heading in the wrong direction. I am pretty confident that, at least, in my State of Maryland, the overwhelming majority of our citizens would be very much opposed to that effort. What always happens is that, when it comes to cutting taxes for the very wealthy or for powerful special interests, many of our Republican colleagues here forget about all the talk about the importance of the deficit and debt. It is OK to run up a \$1.5 trillion debt on top of our already high debt in order to provide tax cuts. But then,

when those debts go up, always the conversation comes around to cutting—cutting our investments in education; cutting Medicare, turning it into a voucher program, as various Republican budgets in the House and Senate have proposed over the years; cutting Medicaid, which is what the Graham-Cassidy bill would have done and, according to the Congressional Budget Office, it is over a \$1 trillion cut, and that is before it went over a total cliff in the outyears.

So let’s, please, colleagues, learn the lesson from how this healthcare fiasco unfolded. When it comes to things like tax reform, let’s proceed in a bipartisan way. Let’s begin in the coming week to get back to the bipartisan discussions on healthcare, so that as we head into the fall, people are not going to experience wounds that are inflicted by the lack of action by this Congress—by this Senate and this House.

I thank you, Mr. President. I hope we can get back to regular order at some point in time and really do the people’s work the way it is intended to be done—in an open, transparent, and bipartisan way.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for approximately 6 or 7 minutes.

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

EPA PROPOSAL ON BIODIESEL

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor because I am very disturbed about some actions coming out of EPA affecting biofuels and contrary to what the President promised. In other words, I think people working for the President aren’t following the President’s direction.

As my colleagues know well, I have championed renewable fuels and other energies for a long period of time. I have worked hard to enact policies to encourage the growth of renewable electricity from sources such as wind and solar. The same is true for biofuels. I have pursued policies to grow our country’s production of renewable fuels, such as conventional corn ethanol, biodiesel, and cellulosic ethanol. I support renewable energy because it is good for the economy. It is good for our national security. It is good for our balance of trade. It is good for the rural economies, and it is good for energy independence.

I was pleased that in the most recent Presidential election, then Candidate Trump—now our President—made clear his support for ethanol and the renewable fuels standard. He said clearly: “We are going to protect the Renewable Fuels Standard.”

On another occasion, Candidate Trump recognized the benefits of the industry when he said this at an ethanol biorefinery:

Amazing what you’ve been able to do—amazing. And it’s great for the country and

the investment is great. Beyond even the product, the investment and the jobs and everything else are great for the country.

Finally, at a summit focusing on renewable fuels in Iowa, as a candidate in January of 2016, Mr. Trump said this:

The RFS, which is Renewable Fuel Standard, is an important tool in the mission to achieve energy independence to the United States. I will do all that is in my power as President to achieve that goal. . . . As President, I will encourage Congress to be cautious in attempting to change and change any part of the RFS. . . . Energy independence is a requirement of America to become great again.

Candidate Trump continued:

My theme is ‘Make America Great Again.’ It’s an important part of it. The EPA should ensure that biofuel RVOs, or blend levels, match the statutory level set by Congress under the RFS.

These are, in fact, very strong words and went over well with farmers and alternative energy people in my State and throughout the country, and I am glad he said them. After years of delay and uncertainty from the previous administration, Iowans are very grateful to hear such determination and conviction from Candidate Trump, now President Trump.

I was somewhat cautious early on when the President named a few members of his Cabinet who were from oil-producing States. Fearful of Big Oil’s opposition to biofuels and then concerned about whether the President would keep his promise, I, along with a number of my Senate colleagues, held a meeting in my office with the nominees for Director of EPA and Secretary of Energy, among others. We expressed to those nominees our support for biofuels and renewable energy and the benefits of strong biofuels policies. One by one, these nominees assured us of their support because they were made well aware of President Trump’s sup-

port by the President himself. They told us that they knew who was boss, and they knew the President supported the Renewable Fuel Standard.

About a month ago, the President called me. I was traveling to Northwest Iowa for my town meetings. He called me. We talked on the cellphone for maybe a couple of minutes. He was somewhat worried—although he didn’t say why he was worried—that people might be questioning whether he still supported ethanol and other biofuels. He made very clear to me that he supports renewable fuels and that he will keep his word on the Renewable Fuel Standard. He said he wanted me to tell that to the people of Iowa.

There are a lot of ways you can tell the people of Iowa, but one of the ways I did what he asked is I tweeted it to the 140,000 people who are on my Twitter feed. I have done what he asked me to do.

Here we are today. You can imagine my surprise this very day when I saw that President Trump’s EPA has released a proposal out of the blue to reduce the volume requirements for biodiesel for 2018 and 2019 under the Renewable Fuel Standard. That is the RFS.

This action today has come out of nowhere. The EPA just released a proposal in July to set blending levels for biodiesel. It did not touch the 2018 level, which was already finalized at 2.1 billion gallons. The July proposal would keep the 2019 levels steady at 2.1 billion gallons.

This is what happened today, which I have already referred to. Today’s announcement proposes to reduce both levels, contrary to what the President had said that he was supporting. It is outrageous that the EPA would change course and propose a reduction in renewable fuel volumes in this particular

way. This seems like a bait and switch from the EPA’s prior proposal and from assurances from President Trump himself and from those Cabinet Secretaries who came to my office to assure us of their support for the RFS.

Reducing volumes as the EPA proposes would undermine renewable fuel production. That is contrary to the worthwhile goal of America first. It will undermine U.S. workers and harm the U.S. economy, particularly in rural America. It is contrary to the goal of meeting the country’s fuel needs through domestic production, which is critical to job creation and economic growth.

This all gives me a strong suspicion that big oil companies and big oil refineries are prevailing once again in this Trump EPA, as they did in the Obama administration, despite assurances to the contrary that I have received from this administration.

You can bet that I plan to press the administration to drop this terrible plan. I hope the officials working for the President will keep the President’s word, so I will make sure that EPA hears loud and clear the impact the EPA’s proposal will have on Iowa’s corn and soybean farmers and the biofuel producers in my State and all the jobs connected with it. That is not a way to make America strong once again.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M.
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:08 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, September 27, 2017, at 10 a.m.