

others across the State and country—will be at risk.

Congressional inaction has also threatened the future of the Children's Health Insurance Program—or CHIP—which provides health insurance to 9 million low-income children and mothers across the country and 27,000 in Hawaii. We should act as soon as possible to pass a bipartisan reauthorization that Senators HATCH and WYDEN negotiated in the Senate Finance Committee.

It seems as though every day the President tweets something new and outrageous to distract us from the true issues facing our country, whether it is the Mueller investigation or his decision to rescind DACA and place hundreds of thousands of DACA Dreamers at risk for deportation. This is a tactic the President has used to great effect during our many debates on healthcare. The President hopes we will be paying more attention to his attacks on NFL players or demeaning comments about the mayor of San Juan instead of his dangerous proposals to take healthcare away from millions of people in our country. We have to keep paying attention and keep our eyes on the ball. We have to keep speaking up and fighting back.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE BUDGET

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, after failing to throw 32 million Americans off of the health insurance they currently have last week, the Republicans are continuing their attack against the working families of our country with one of the most destructive budgets in American history.

I know the American people today, for very good reason, are preoccupied with the horror of what happened in Las Vegas, and people are horrified about what has happened in Puerto Rico, but I would beg of the American people to please pay attention to the budget proposal and the so-called tax reform ideas brought by the Republican leadership in the Senate, as well as in the House.

This proposal would cause devastating economic pain for tens of millions of Americans by, on the one hand, giving incredibly large tax breaks for the wealthiest people in the country, while at the same time making it harder for our children to get a decent education, harder for the families of this country to get the healthcare they need, harder for families, literally, to put food on the table, harder to protect our environment, and harder for the elderly to live their retirement years with dignity.

This is the Robin Hood proposal in reverse. The Robin Hood principle in reverse is that instead of taking from the rich to help the poor, this proposal makes massive cuts in programs desperately needed by the middle class and working families of our country, precisely to give unbelievably large tax breaks to the people on top—the people who least need those tax breaks.

At a time of massive income and wealth inequality, where we have more inequality today than at any time since the 1920s and more inequality than almost any major country on Earth, where the very, very rich are becoming much richer and we have 40 million people living in poverty and tens of millions of middle-class families are going nowhere in a hurry, this Republican budget, according to the Tax Policy Center, at the end of 10 years, would provide 80 percent of the tax benefits to the top 1 percent.

Right now, today, the rich are doing phenomenally well. Everybody understands that. The middle class is shrinking. But according to the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center, by the end of the decade, nearly 80 percent of the tax benefits in the Republican plan would go to the top 1 percent—under this plan, this Republican plan. The top one-tenth of 1 percent, the richest of the rich, would receive a tax break of over \$1 million a year.

At a time when so many of our families are struggling to put food on the table, struggling to figure out how to send their kids to college, struggling to figure out how to pay for childcare, we have a Republican tax proposal that would provide trillions of dollars in tax breaks to the richest people in this country.

This is a budget that would increase the Federal deficit by \$1.5 trillion over the next decade. We have heard on the Senate floor my Republican friends talking about how worried they are about the \$20 trillion national debt and how high the deficits are. This proposal, designed to give tax breaks to the wealthiest people in this country, would increase the Federal deficit by \$1.5 trillion over the next decade, and, by the way, this is a conservative estimate. There are those who think the deficit would go up a lot more than that.

This is a Republican proposal that eliminates the estate tax. What is the estate tax? Republicans name it the “death tax,” but let us be clear about what this tax is and who benefits from it. Despite Republican efforts trying to find farmers or ranchers who would benefit from it, this is not legislation designed to help farmers or ranchers. This is legislation designed to help the top two-tenths of 1 percent. So 99.8 percent of the American people will not benefit one nickel from the repeal of the estate tax. Only the wealthiest of the wealthy will benefit. If this Republican proposal to repeal the estate tax would go through, the Walton family of Walmart, the wealthiest family in

America, would receive a tax cut of up to \$52 billion.

Does anybody for one second think that, at a time when so many of our people are struggling and when we have a \$20 trillion national debt, we should be passing legislation that gives the wealthiest family in this country up to a \$52 billion tax break by repealing the estate tax?

But it is not just the Walton family, of course. This is a budget that says that if you are the second wealthiest family in America, the Koch brothers—and this, by the way, is just coincidental, no doubt. I know it is amazing how these coincidences take place. The Koch brothers are a family who contributed hundreds of millions of dollars year after year to the Republican Party to elect candidates who represent the wealthy and powerful. Just coincidentally, that family would receive a tax break of up to \$38 billion.

People ask why the Koch brothers are contributing hundreds of millions of dollars every campaign cycle. That is a huge amount of money. That is a huge amount of money for normal families, but when you are the second wealthiest family and you have a tax break of \$38 billion, contributing a few million dollars every campaign cycle is pocket change and is a good investment.

This is a budget that will cut Medicare by \$450 billion. Right now in this country, we have millions and millions of seniors who are struggling to make ends meet. They can't afford their prescription drugs. They can't afford to keep their homes warm in the wintertime. Yet this Republican budget would cut Medicare by \$450 billion.

Now, the Republicans tried, time after time, despite massive opposition from the American people, to repeal the Affordable Care Act. In every one of their pieces of legislation, they made devastating cuts in Medicaid. Well, they are back again. Ostensibly, this is not a healthcare piece of legislation. It is a budget. It is so-called tax reform. There is \$1 trillion of cuts in the Medicaid Program. So if you were worried last week, 2 weeks ago, and 1 month ago about what the terrific Republican healthcare bills would do, stay worried because this bill will cut \$1 trillion over 10 years in Medicaid, resulting in at least 15 million Americans losing their health insurance.

Can you imagine a set of priorities that says that we are going to throw 15 million people off of health insurance in order to give tens of billions of dollars in tax breaks to the wealthiest families in this country? Unbelievable.

It really is unbelievable.

This proposal not only adds to the deficit, not only makes massive cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, it also impacts the American people in many ways. We have a program in this country called the Women, Infants, and Children Program, and at a time when the United States has the highest rate of infant mortality of any major country on

Earth, what we do to try to deal with that issue is provide help to low-income pregnant women and their babies after the babies are born. This Republican budget would make about \$6.5 billion in cuts to the WIC Program, eliminating nutrition assistance to over 1.2 million pregnant women, new moms, babies, and toddlers in Vermont and all over this country.

Here are the priorities: Tax breaks for the Walton family, for the Koch brothers' families, who are billionaires, and cuts in programs for low-income, pregnant women who want to have healthy babies.

At a time when the cost of childcare has skyrocketed all over this country—in the State of Vermont, it is a very serious problem; families cannot find affordable childcare—the Republican budget eliminates Head Start services for 25,000 children each and every year by cutting this program by about \$3 billion. In total, the Republican budget would cut more than \$5 trillion from education, healthcare, affordable housing, childcare, transportation, and other programs the working families of this country desperately rely upon.

Let's be clear about something else. This is not me talking; Republican economists are saying the same thing.

What is the theory underlying this whole approach of giving tax breaks to billionaires? The theory is that when you give tax breaks to billionaires and large, multinational corporations, somehow or another, they are going to start using the new revenue they acquire to invest in the economy and create decent-paying jobs. This is the so-called trickle-down economic theory, and this is a theory that Senate Republicans and President Trump have embraced with this budget.

The fact is that anyone who looks at history understands that whole theory is a fraud. It has always been an abysmal failure. Since Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush slashed taxes on the wealthy and deregulated Wall Street, trillions of dollars in wealth have been redistributed from the middle class and working families to a handful of millionaires and billionaires. That is what trickle-down economics results in—a transfer of wealth from the middle class to the people on top—and that is exactly what this Republican proposal will do.

Today we have more wealth inequality than at any time since the 1920s. Unbelievably, the top one-tenth of 1 percent now owns almost as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent. This budget would make a very bad situation worse, and it would increase the level of wealth inequality in America today.

As the ranking member of the Budget Committee, I intend to do everything I can to oppose this absurd set of priorities, and when I do that, I am speaking for the vast majority of the American people. Poll after poll after poll tells us that the American people do not think billionaires need more tax

breaks. Poll after poll after poll tells us that the American people do not agree with the Republican leadership when they want to throw millions of people off of the health insurance they have. This is not a budget for the American people. This is not a budget for economic growth. This is a budget paid for and fought for by the Koch brothers and a handful of billionaires who will gain very handsomely if this budget were to be passed.

I would remind my Republican colleagues—and this is not a very radical idea—that we were elected to the Senate not just to represent a handful of billionaires; we were elected to the Senate to do our best for the middle class and working families of our country. This should not be legislation designed as payback for hundreds of millions of dollars in campaign contributions. We need to pass legislation that protects the interests of working families and the middle class and lower income people.

Thank you, Mr. President.

(Mr. STRANGE assumed the Chair.)

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING PETE DOMENICI

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I am joined today by my colleague from New Mexico, Senator HEINRICH. We thought we would come to the floor together and talk about Senator Domenici, our former colleague who passed away recently.

Pietro Vichi Domenici was born to Italian immigrants in Albuquerque, NM, in 1932. He was a grocer's son. He worked in his parents' store and attended Catholic school. He graduated from our own University of New Mexico. He pitched in college on the Albuquerque Dukes' farm team, and he taught high school mathematics. He went to law school and built a law practice. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1973 and became New Mexico's longest serving Senator.

He was a husband, father, and grandfather. He married Nancy Burke right out of law school, and his beautiful wife of 59 years was key to his long and successful career. She is a good friend of ours, and we spent an hour with her in Albuquerque a little over a week ago. She is still very strong, and she is still very focused, as one would expect as a mother and grandmother of her children and grandchildren.

Pete Domenici was a statesman. He worked across party lines to find pragmatic solutions for the American people. New Mexicans will always remember him as one of the strongest fighters our State will ever know.

Senator Domenici and I belonged to different political parties, and we didn't always agree on things, but I always appreciated that he cared deeply about the issues, and he put the Nation and New Mexico's interests first as he

saw them. I join all of New Mexico in thanking him and in mourning his passing.

Senator Domenici's math skills and his beginnings in local government served him well during his 36 years in the U.S. Senate. Anyone who has served in city government knows the importance of a budget. Sitting as chair or ranking member on the Senate Budget Committee for 22 years, he held the Federal Government to the same rigorous, logical standard. He mastered the complexities of the Federal budget and served longer in a leadership position on that committee than any other Senator. He was a budget deficit hawk and a realist. He understood that supply-side economics do not work and that big tax cuts will not result in growth leading to a balanced budget. He went up against his own party, and he went up against President Ronald Reagan on the same budget issue.

In the 1990s, he worked with President Clinton to produce a budget surplus for fiscal year 1998—the first surplus in our budget since 1969. His willingness to work with Democrats, his pragmatism, and his stature with his own party made it possible.

On the Budget Committee, he understood how to align New Mexico and national interests.

He recognized the potential of our National Labs—Los Alamos and Sandia—and the potential they had for our State. He understood their importance to the national interest. He championed their work for decades. Our Labs provide thousands of good jobs in central and northern New Mexico, and the breadth and depth of their research and scientific contributions to our Nation are nothing short of astonishing. Pete Domenici played a critical role in the Labs' developments.

He also had a key appreciation of the importance to New Mexico and the Nation of our military bases. In 2005, Cannon Air Force Base in southern New Mexico was slated to close. This would have cost New Mexico lots of jobs and would have had a devastating impact on the overall economy of the State. Senator Domenici, along with the entire delegation and Governor Richardson, worked to secure a different and critical mission for Cannon Air Force Base. Today, the 27th Special Operations Wing is going strong at Cannon. Six thousand men and women are employed, and rural Roosevelt and Curry Counties benefit from the base's \$500 million economic impact.

Senator Domenici's fingerprints are not only all over the Budget Committee but are all over the Energy and Natural Resources Committee—which he chaired for 4 years in the early 2000s—and the Indian Affairs Committee, which I am fortunate to sit on today. He helped position the United States to be energy independent through the Energy Policy Acts of 2005 and 2007—the last time we really had bipartisan energy acts. He was a strong advocate on behalf of Tribes, working