

After that, this afternoon we will take up the nomination of Randal Quarles, the President's nominee to help oversee the Federal Reserve System. Mr. Quarles brings with him both domestic and international financial experience from multiple administrations, and he will be a strong guide for our Nation's monetary policy. We also intend to confirm Mr. Quarles to the position of Vice Chair for Supervision. This is an essential role created by Dodd-Frank, and it is critical that Mr. Quarles begin this work over at the Fed.

Tomorrow, the Senate will confirm Lee Francis Cissna to be Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Mr. Cissna has a wealth of experience in immigration policy, serving in senior policy positions in both the Bush and Obama administrations and then working for the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. He was voted out of committee with bipartisan support. I look forward to his confirmation to this important role.

Then we will consider Callista Gingrich, whom the President has nominated to be our Nation's Ambassador to the Holy See. Ms. Gingrich's work will continue the strong relationship between our Nation and the Vatican, building upon shared values, goals, and global responsibilities.

I thank each of these nominees for their willingness to serve our Nation. They are each well qualified and suited for their role. I look forward to the Senate confirming them very soon.

TRIBUTE TO DR. TOM APPLETON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to congratulate Dr. Tom Appleton of Lexington, KY, on his retirement from the History Department at Eastern Kentucky University. One of Kentucky's premier historians, Tom has spent his career writing about the Commonwealth's rich heritage. He joined ECU's faculty in the fall of 2000, and over the years, he has left a positive imprint on his students, his field, and his State.

He has also proved to be an invaluable resource for me. A number of years ago, I began a series of talks focused on former U.S. Senators from Kentucky. In each speech, I have tried to convey a bit of political history through the lives of these distinguished individuals. Tom's counsel has been invaluable in my work to prepare these speeches and pay tribute to some of Kentucky's prominent political leaders.

Before joining ECU's faculty nearly 20 years ago, Tom spent more than two decades at the Kentucky Historical Society. It certainly shows. Even the TV show "Jeopardy" has used him as a historical resource. Tom has been the co-editor of six books on the history of the American South, including a groundbreaking look into the lives of Kentucky women, and he is currently working on a biography of Kentucky's

own A.B. "Happy" Chandler, who served as Governor, Senator, and baseball's second commissioner. Tom's passion for Kentucky's rich history is obvious.

He has been a wonderful friend and resource for me, a real champion and advocate for our Commonwealth, and has made a lasting impact on the next generation through his teaching. As one former student recalled, "Dr. Appleton's mission in teaching Kentucky history was less about imparting facts and dates and more about ensuring that students departed the class with an enhanced understanding of the rich cultural tapestry of Kentucky. He admonished students to be worthy of the proud legacy of our Commonwealth's great statesmen, military leaders, writers, and sports legends." That is a legacy to be proud of.

After his final semester of teaching, Tom could be forgiven for wanting to retire from his work as a historian altogether, but that is not Tom. He plans to continue his research and writing about the lives and events that shaped our home State, and I plan to continue reading his fascinating take on our shared Kentucky heritage.

I wish Tom well, and I urge all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating Dr. Tom Appleton on a truly remarkable career.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Hargan nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Eric D. Hargan, of Illinois, to be Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 11 a.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

PUERTO RICO AND U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS RECOVERY EFFORT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I understand the administration intends to submit its first request for disaster aid for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands today. It is a good first step, but it is just the start of the financial aid we will need to provide to the American citizens in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

I urge my colleagues to work quickly to add additional and urgent funding for recovery, like community development block grant dollars, just as we did for Texas after Hurricane Harvey, with the understanding that an additional and more comprehensive request for Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Florida, Texas, and the western wildfires will be coming from the administration once the damage assessments are complete.

LAS VEGAS MASS SHOOTING

Mr. President, returning to the events in Las Vegas on Sunday, we cannot let this American tragedy, another in a long line of American tragedies, fall out of our hearts and minds too quickly.

Let us pledge to be there for the families of the 59 Americans who were killed and the over 500 Americans who are still injured and recovering. Seeing the pictures of so many of these beautiful, young people in the prime of life—young, excited about the world, some of them newly married, some of them a little older with young children—breaks your heart. So not just today or this week, but in the weeks and months to come, let us pledge to continue to show our gratitude to those firefighters and cops, the emergency and medical personnel, and all the other first responders who rushed to the scene. Let us pledge to remember the acts of everyday heroism that are a beacon of light in this moment of darkness: the lines to give blood that stretched around the block at 6 a.m., the teachers who went to school the day after the shooting to try and give their students a sense of normalcy. I hope these are the things President Trump highlights in his visit to Las Vegas today.

And one more thing: President Trump has an opportunity to wrench his party out of the grasp of the NRA and get our country and our Congress to start talking about commonsense gun safety reforms. Before President Trump ran for office, he repeatedly supported several sane, rational gun safety measures, including the assault weapons ban and longer waiting periods to purchase a gun. As recently as 2012, President Trump supported President Obama's response to Sandy Hook. In the wake of Sandy Hook, President Obama called for action. In the wake of

Las Vegas, President Trump should do the same.

We have heard it over and over again: Now is not the time to talk about gun safety because it would politicize the tragedy. My friend the majority leader said no less than three times at his press conference yesterday that it is premature and inappropriate to talk about any legislative solutions to the epidemic of gun violence.

As Martin Luther King said in his letter at the Birmingham Jail, “not now” means never. “Wait” means never. That is what he said: Wait means never.

The Republicans don’t want to talk about it today, tomorrow, next week, next month, or next year. We know why they don’t want to talk about it. They know the country is totally against their view. It is not political out in the country. Over 90 percent of Americans support universal background checks. A significant majority of Republicans support them. That is not political, I would say to my friend the majority leader.

It is political for him because he is afraid of the NRA, a powerful lobby that is off to the extreme. It is not political for American people or for Republicans. They are for it. Over 70 percent of gun owners support background checks for private sales and at gun shows. The only place where this is political is here, and that is because the NRA, the gun manufacturers, and their powerful lobby make these folks afraid—afraid to do the right thing. They know it is the right thing.

The NRA and these lobbies are the swamp the President is talking about. President Trump talks about the swamp, groups of lobbyists who thwart the will of the American people. That is what the NRA does.

So I say to the President, Mr. President, you have an opportunity to buck the NRA, buck the gun lobbyists, buck the swamp, and lead this country in an adult conversation about gun violence. The President can and should bring the parties together—the leaders of this Congress—and let both sides know he is ready to address this issue head-on and talk about sensible, moderate measures of gun safety and, above all, background checks.

The President’s visit is an important one today. He should be going. He should seek to provide comfort to the families and express gratitude to our first responders. But he should take it one step further. Call us together, lead this Nation in a debate about rational, moderate gun safety laws. Get us started on the work that so many Americans are desperate for us to do.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, on one final matter, the Republican tax plan, we Democrats have long said that we are willing to work with our Republican colleagues on tax reform, and we laid out our principles early on so that there would be no mistake about them. We wanted tax reform to be deficit neutral. It

shouldn’t increase the deficit. For every reduction in rate, they ought to close a loophole. We wanted it to go through regular order, not the way healthcare did, not reconciliation, but work with us. You would get a much more sensible product. Most importantly, we didn’t want to give a tax cut to the top 1 percent. They are doing great already. God bless them. They don’t need any more tax relief. It is the middle class that does. But the framework the GOP released last week violates all three of these commonsense principles, vastly favoring the wealthy over working Americans.

I have spoken several times about tax breaks for the rich included in this package—lowering the top rate from 39 to 36 percent, repealing the estate tax, opening up a gaping tax loophole for hedge fund managers, wealthy Wall Street firms, lobbyists, and law firms by lowering the rate on passthroughs so that these rich people would pay only 25 percent on their personal income tax while other people pay a lot more.

This morning, I want to highlight not only how the Republican plan favors the rich but also sticks it to the middle class. This is something that the Acting President pro tempore has brought up.

Just this week we found a bombshell contained within the GOP resolution they are using to pass tax reform. The Republicans plan to cut Medicare by \$473 billion and Medicaid by more than \$1 trillion. It can be a little hard to find, but it is right there in the GOP budget—\$473 billion for Medicare, \$1 trillion for Medicaid.

If you are an older American, if you have a family in a nursing home or someone in treatment for opioid addiction and you think the GOP plan doesn’t affect you, think again. The AARP—not a political organization, it simply represents the interests of the elderly—sent a letter yesterday opposing this Republican plan, the one in the House, and I think we have one in the Senate as well. It is the same group that represented senior citizens and fought the debacle on healthcare that the Republicans proposed.

The Republicans are proposing to pay for their giant tax cut to the rich by gutting Medicare and Medicaid. That is the bombshell this week. That is the nugget that will destroy their whole plan. Americans are so against those kinds of cuts.

Amazingly, it is just like the inverse of the Republican plan on healthcare. In each case, they gut healthcare for Americans who need it most to pay for taxes for Americans who need it the least.

The healthcare plan focused on cuts to Medicaid but snuck in tax cuts for the rich. This plan focuses on tax cuts to the rich and sneaks in cuts to Medicare and Medicaid.

The GOP budget is another page out of the same playbook. The GOP plan contains another punch to the gut of the middle class.

This is what the Acting President pro tempore, I believe, spoke about yesterday.

In the form of the repeal of the State and local deduction—44 million Americans take the State and local deduction. That is one-third of all taxpayers. This is not just a small, rarified group in California or New York. It is across the country. They get an average of several thousand dollars off their taxes each year. That includes 40 percent of taxpayers making between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per year and 70 percent of taxpayers earning from \$100,000 to \$200,000.

This is a middle-class tax deduction worth several thousand dollars a year, and the GOP tax plan yanks it away. Taking it away means double taxation on middle-class families.

For many families, this will not be offset by a larger standard deduction in the GOP plan. Largely due to the elimination of State and local, the Tax Policy Center estimates that 30 percent of those making between \$50,000 and \$150,000 and 60 percent of those making between \$150,000 and \$300,000 will see a tax increase with the GOP plan, and that is after doubling the standard deduction. By the way, don’t think that it is just a few States; the numbers are astounding across the country, as folks in every State claim this deduction. I say to my dear friend the chairman of the Finance Committee that 35 percent of Utahns take this deduction, 33 percent of Georgians, and 32 percent of Coloradans.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a list of how many taxpayers are affected in every State by removing State and local deductibility and how much it will cost them on average.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

FIGURE 7.—PERCENTAGE OF TAX UNITS THAT USE THE SALT DEDUCTION AND THE AVERAGE DEDUCTION BY STATE

State	% with SALT Deductions	Average SALT Deduction*
MD	46	\$12,931
CT	41	19,664
NY	41	17,850
DC	40	16,442
VA	37	11,288
MA	37	15,571
OR	36	12,616
UT	35	8,291
MN	35	12,954
NY	35	22,169
CA	34	18,437
GA	33	9,158
RI	33	12,434
CO	32	9,017
DE	32	9,194
IL	31	12,523
WI	31	11,653
NH	31	10,121
WA	30	7,402
IA	29	10,163
HI	29	9,905
NC	29	9,587
PA	29	11,248
AZ	28	7,403
MT	28	9,357
ID	28	8,862
ME	28	11,431
NE	28	11,088
SC	27	8,765
VT	27	12,407
MI	27	9,648
MO	26	9,886
OH	26	10,444
KY	26	9,955
AL	26	5,918