As we all know, an army of lobbyists, lawyers, and other folks have, since 1986, larded the Tax Code with a wide variety of deductions, credits, and other special preferences. What we need to do is clear out some of that thicket so we can lower the rates for everybody, so everybody gets a tax cut, and I mean everybody.

It is not going to be easy because we can imagine that army of lobbyists descending upon Capitol Hill trying to protect the special deals they were able to carve out of the Tax Code since 1986, but we have to do it.

None of these facts that would be important in order to conduct a reasoned and objective analysis was included in the framework, but all of them would have great potential to greatly move the final numbers. These, and many other details, are essential for any honest fiscal assessment of changes in our Tax Code.

When will we begin to see some of those numbers? We need to pass the budget resolution out of the Budget Committee this week—which we will. Then, after Columbus Day, we will come back and have a debate and a vote-arama to pass the budget resolution, which will equip us with the technical tools we need in order to pass a reconciliation bill.

Then the real work is going to be occurring in the Finance Committee on this side of the Capitol, where we will take the chairman's mark—the original bill which Senator HATCH will introduce at the committee—which will fill in a lot of these details. I predict that will be sometime around the third or maybe fourth week of this month.

Then we are going to have an amendment process. The real question in my mind is, Will our Democratic colleagues participate and make this a bipartisan bill? I hope they will.

I also want to mention two other related points that deserve mention but which were left out of the Tax Policy's report. One is, the committees in Congress will actually have the ability to come up with the details I mentioned. That will happen in the Ways and Means Committee in the House and in the Finance Committee in the Senate. There will be, as there should be, discussion, deliberation, and compromise as the normal legislative process works out.

There have been many around Capitol Hill who have said we don't have enough ''regular order.'' What that means is, we need to conduct the normal legislative process and have the committees actually do what they are designed to do—which is to have hearings and vote on amendments and pass the bill out so it is available to be heard on the floor of the Senate. Then the Senate has a chance to amend it, vote on it, and debate it.

The second point I want to make is, any analysis of tax reform must consider what will be the impact on economic growth that will result from it. As the Journal stated, if the rate of GDP growth speeds up from the Obama administration's pace of 2 percent a year to 3 percent, incomes would rise and revenues would increase to the Treasury by some $2.5 trillion. That is what is most often underlooked, including by some of the people who score these bills.

If we are successful in passing pro-growth tax reform and tax cuts and we can get this sleeping giant of an economy awake and roaring again just to get it to 3 percent—which is below the average growth of the economy over the last three decades—just at 3 percent, it would put $2.5 trillion more in the Treasury. That would be great because it would help us not only pay our bills, it would help us pay down the deficit and the debt.

Obviously, these are important factors to acknowledge. The best way to accomplish meaningful tax reform is to lower rates and simplify provisions across the board, to give Americans more take-home pay and have to spend less time hiring somebody just to complete their tax return. We can't simply throw up our hands, do nothing, and accept the status quo because American workers and job creators can't afford the status quo.

I am optimistic about the framework that has been released and look forward to working with my colleagues on the Finance Committee in the days and weeks ahead. What we have now is a useful starting point, and we need to fill in the blanks—and we will—so then we can have a debate based on the facts, not based on somebody's wild, fevered imagination about what the tax bill might look like.

One last point on that. We have the highest tax rate in the world for corporations and businesses. This used to be something that even the President of the United States, Barack Obama, back in 2011 acknowledged and said we need to reduce that in order to be competitive globally. We know too many of our jobs are moving overseas.

I mentioned yesterday that IBM, one of the largest businesses in the world, has more employees in India than they have in the United States. Now, there are probably varied reasons for that, including our Tax Code. Some of it is access to highly trained workers, lower costs of operation, and the like, but our Tax Code is a self-inflicted economic wound for our country, and the people who pay the price are the people whose wages are stagnant or people who are looking for a job and can't find one. We need to put more money back in their pocket, let them keep more of what they earn, and get this economy growing again.

PROTECT OUR CHILDREN ACT

Finally, just yesterday, the House passed a bill I introduced with Senators BLUMENTHAL, KLOBUCHAR, and HELLER called the PROTECT Our Children Act. This bill helps to stop the exploitation of children across the country and over the internet by reauthorizing the Internet Crimes Against Children, or ICAC, Task Force Program.

The Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force is a national network of 61 coordinated entities that represent 3,500 Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies that investigate and prosecute child predators. They develop victim support programs, provide training and technical assistance, and advance forensic methods.

They also help facilitate community education to make parents more aware of this threat against all of our children so we can prevent internet crimes against children before they even happen. This is an issue I have cared about for a long time, starting with my service as attorney general of Texas. I saw firsthand how vulnerable children can quickly become victimized at the hands of some truly despicable individuals. I also learned about the resources it takes to stop and prosecute these predators. Like the Presiding Officer, who also served as attorney general, we know that not all of our jurisdictions have access to the same sort of expertise and resources so it is important to have this resource in order to help them investigate and prosecute these crimes.

Back in 2000, when I started it in Texas, we called it the Internet Bureau. It is kind of a quaint title these days. Now I think they call it the Cyber Crime Unit, but we call it the Internet Bureau to fight internet crimes like child pornography. Tragically, in this day and age, the internet provides a safe harbor for too many people who want to use it for their own nefarious purposes. It can be a difficult arena for our law enforcement to navigate, but this bill ensures that they will have the resources to fight cyber crimes and keep our communities safe by reauthorizing programs until 2022.

I am happy the House has now acted, and I am thankful for the work of my colleagues from Connecticut, Minnesota, and Nevada for joining me in this effort. I look forward to working expeditiously to ensure that we repass this legislation in the Senate as soon as possible.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

HEALTHCARE

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a subject that has been on our minds in recent weeks and months and, in fact, years; that is, healthcare—one of the most complex and confusing but important topics that we have to consider.

Before I get into the bulk of what I want to address, I want to make the point once again that as we are debating healthcare and debating who pays, how much they pay, whether it is the ACA or Medicare or Medicaid or private insurance or private pay, we also have to begin a serious discussion about the underlying cost of healthcare.

Regardless of who is paying, it is going to break us. If healthcare continues to grow in cost as it has over the last 20 years, it is going to eat the Federal budget, family budgets, individual budgets, and it is going to be something we absolutely have to address. Usually around here we don't address something until it is a crisis.

I would argue, as we are approaching 20 percent of GDP, with $1 out of every $5 in the country being committed to healthcare costs—more than twice as much as most other countries in the world, far more than any other country in the world—we have to address this issue.

Arguing about who pays is not going to solve the problem. That is important because in the interim, that is what is going to protect our citizens' coverage and what is going to protect our citizens from a healthcare disaster, a healthcare crisis.

I want to preface my remarks with—I think this is something we all need to be thinking about—how do we move beyond the discussion we are having now, not that it is unimportant, but we also need to move beyond the discussion and start talking about the underlying cost and why is it that Americans are paying virtually twice as much as anyone in the world for healthcare per capita—or as a percent of GDP or however you want to calculate it—without noticeably better results? In fact, most worldwide studies indicate the results of our healthcare system are not as good as those in many other countries.

It would be one thing if we were paying a lot of money and getting absolutely superior care across the board in our country, but that is not the case. In measurements such as infant mortality, longevity—standard basic healthcare indicators—we are not doing very well. Yet we are paying twice as much. There is something wrong with that, and we have to address it.

I want to talk about the Affordable Care Act. I want to start with the point that it is the law of the land. It is the law of the land.

I am rising today in sadness but also in anger because there is a lot of talk about the Affordable Care Act collapsing, imploding. It is not collapsing. It is being mugged. It is being stabbed in the back. It is being sabotaged deliberately and consciously by the actions of the administration.

I want to emphasize that this isn't about ideology. It is not about politics. It is not about who wins and who loses or which party is up or who voted or who didn't. This is about people. It is about people in Maine. It is about people, many of whom got care for the first time under the Affordable Care Act; lobstermen, small farmers, small businesspeople, individuals finally had a shot at reasonably priced healthcare.

It is not perfect by any means. I would never argue that. In fact, I have been working on proposals since the day I got here on how to improve it, how to fix some of the problems, how to make it better, how to have the effects be less intense on some parts of our economy. It is the law of the land. The impacts of what we do here or don't do here fall on real people—real people, in my case, in my home State of Maine.

The Affordable Care Act is not collapsing; it is being sabotaged. Here is a partial list.

In January, during the period of the last open enrollment, one of the first acts of the new administration was to cut the advertising on television, advising people that they had this healthcare option. Cut the ads, that is No. 1. That was in January.

Then they announced they were going to minimize the enforcement of the personal mandate. If you tell somebody you are not going to enforce something, that is an invitation to not abide by it, to not pay any attention to it. People can argue about whether that is desirable, but that is the law. To announce that administratively you are not going to enforce it, again, what does that do? It reduces the number of people who are going to get healthcare. That, in turn, undermines the individual market, and that, in turn, makes it less financially viable. That is a deliberate act that will undermine the viability of this law.

In April, there began a series of what turned into seven different threats from various people in the administration to not make the legally mandated CSR payments—the cost-sharing reduction payments—which are not bailouts to insurance companies but which were designed as part of the law to hold the rates down and to hold the deductibles down for those people buying coverage under the Affordable Care Act. Continuously threatening the reduction or the elimination of these payments has created an uncertainty in the marketplace that is now coming home to roost.

Just last week, Anthem announced they are leaving the Maine marketplace. They cited a number of reasons, but one of the chief reasons was the uncertainty created by whether these payments are going to be made.

Recently, the HELP committee had a series of hearings on this subject. They had a bipartisan group of Governors. They had a bipartisan group of insurance commissioners, health experts from across the country. I was at all but one of those hearings. I believe I am right in saying it was unanimous that we must ensure the continuation of the CSR payments in order to stabilize the market and reduce premiums projected to increase this coming year.

The number nationally is estimated to be about 20 percent—a 20-percent increase attributable to the failure to ensure that the CSR payments will be made because an insurance company, if they are setting rates, has to factor into their rates the risk of these payments not being made. The testimony is—it depends somewhat on the State, but roughly a 20-percent increase is attributable to just this fact.

If we could pass legislation here—unfortunately, we missed the deadline, but we may be able to work on that because the deadline was just last week. But if we could simply ensure those payments are made, that in itself would lower rates by 20 percent next year on a silver plan.

By the way, if those CSRs aren't made and the rates go up, ironically, that means the mandatory payments of subsidies to individuals under the Affordable Care Act will also go up. So it will cost the Treasury money—additional money not accounted for, roughly $200 billion over the next 10 years.

What else has gone on? In May, there was another one from the head of the Office of Management and Budget. The administration has not decided whether to pay the CSRs. That is a big red signal to the insurance companies: You can't count on this, so you better raise rates. In May, the budget was released. In the budget, there were drastic cuts in the call centers for the Affordable Care Act, in the in-person assistance, and in marketing. And just for good measure, they announced they were cutting the enrollment period in half, from 3 months to 6 weeks. What possible reason can there be to do that, except that you want fewer people to sign up? That is called sabotage—reducing from 3 months to 6 weeks.

Then, all along, the Health and Human Services Department has been monkeying around with the website, taking down explanatory material about the Affordable Care Act, taking down material indicating why this would be a good deal for people and, instead, putting up critical material.

On August 31, the administration announced reductions in outreach of 90 percent and cuts in assistance to people trying to navigate this system by 40 percent. This is complicated material. Any of us who have signed up for insurance—we all have the Affordable Care Act. Most people don't know that. But we had to go on the website and choose a policy for ourselves. It is hard, it is complicated, and to take away the people who are in the communities helping people work through these various decisions and weigh the different policies, the deductibles, and how to compare them is the same as taking away the coverage. It is an act of sabotage.

The most recent one I just learned about this morning. This is amazing. The Affordable Care Act is based on a website, healthcare.gov. We all know it had terrible problems when it started. There is no excuse for that. I was critical of it at the time. Those were problems that were not intentional.

Now intentional problems are being created. This is the one that really gets me. I just learned this morning that every Sunday during the bobtail enrollment period, the 6-week enrollment period, the website is going to be closed for 12 hours for maintenance. Isn't that amazing? For 12 hours on the one day of the week when many working people are going to have an opportunity to try to understand this system and enroll, they are going to be down from midnight Saturday night until noon on Sunday, the middle of the day on Sunday.

I want to go back to the beginning. This isn't about ideology. This is about seeing that the laws are faithfully executed. That is why they call it the administration. The administration is supposed to administer the laws, not unadminister them.

We are talking about people. Why does anyone want to have fewer people with insurance? I am at a loss to understand the motivation. I can understand if you don't like the ACA. If you don't like the ACA, let's work together and find ways to improve it and change it, but figure out how to keep people with health insurance.

The uninsured rate in America has fallen 50 percent because of the Affordable Care Act. That is an enormous achievement. It is one that should be celebrated, not sabotaged. That is what is so puzzling to me about this: fewer people with coverage and higher costs to the Treasury.

We can do better than this. These are all things the administration in good faith can say: OK, we don't like the ACA, but we are going to move beyond the politics of this and try to help people get the coverage they desperately need.

This is about real people's lives. This is about lifting the threat, the cloud of a healthcare disaster, both physically and financially, from families across America. We are talking about millions of families—not tens of thousands but millions of families. I don't get why we are deliberately trying to undermine and sabotage something that is so meaningful to so many people. As one can tell, it makes me angry. Mostly, it makes me sad because I know people in Maine who have benefited, who have gotten coverage, who did not have it before and who will not have it if this is taken away—people who need those navigators to help them, people who need to be able to use the website on a Sunday morning, people who need to have rates that are lower because the CSRs have been funded, and we are not continuously raising the uncertainty of that piece of this law.

We can do better. This is about the health of our people. I cannot think of anything more important. We can have different ways of getting there, but right now we have a law that is in place, and until we change it—and we should change it; we should fix it—we should administer it straight up, straightforwardly, as it was written and as it was intended. This is too important for politics, and it is too important for ideology. This is all about people and their health.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The Senator from Utah.

TAX REFORM

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, last week I joined with the Secretary of the Treasury, the Director of the National Economic Council, our Senate majority leader, the Speaker of the House, and the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee in releasing a unified framework for tax reform.

This is a big step in the ongoing effort to overhaul our Nation's miserable Tax Code. I have been in the Senate awhile, and I can only remember a few times when the White House and the House and Senate leadership were in agreement on an issue as complicated as tax reform so the current state of affairs is pretty remarkable. Still, as we made clear in the framework document, this is only a step; it is not a final product.

The House and the Senate tax-writing committees will be tasked with putting together legislation that is aimed at meeting the goals and principles that are outlined in the framework. Therefore, as the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, my top goal at the moment is to produce a comprehensive tax reform bill that can get at least 14 votes in the committee because, without that, there likely will not be any tax reform. Yet, before we can get to that point, we have to pass the fiscal year 2018 budget resolution.

Make no mistake, the budget resolution is critical to our tax reform efforts. If we are going to move a tax reform vehicle in the current environment, we need a resolution in place with a workable reconciliation instruction that will allow us to produce a bill of sufficient size and scope to give middle-class taxpayers a pay raise, grow our economy, and create more American jobs.

As we all know, the Budget Committee will begin marking up its resolution later today, and it will include the type of instruction we need in order to produce a bill that will fix our broken tax system, boost economic growth, and give a pay raise to middle-class Americans.

I am grateful for the leadership of Chairman ENZI and all of our colleagues on the Budget Committee for their work in crafting the resolution, and I urge everyone who supports tax reform, whether he is in Congress or elsewhere, to support the budget resolution.

Once again, that is the next big step in this process, and it is an absolutely essential step. Once that is done, the Finance Committee will be able to move forward on crafting and marking up a tax reform bill.

Some have said tax reform is a do-or-die moment for the GOP. I wholeheartedly believe that to be true, not just because we might lose an election or that our poll numbers might go down, it is that Republicans have promised, for some time now, that we will deliver meaningful, comprehensive tax reform that will spur economic growth, increase wages and well-paying jobs, and simplify our existing system. We need to deliver on that promise and not just because we will suffer politically if we do not. We need to deliver because the cost of doing nothing—the cost of maintaining the status quo for the foreseeable future—will be too much for the American people and our economy to bear.

The last major overhaul of our Tax Code was 31 years ago, and in many respects, our current tax system was built for the economy of 1986 and is ill-suited for the needs of today. In the last 31 years, we have seen a dramatic increase in international trade and expanded globalization. We have seen the fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of most centrally run economies, and of course we have seen the development and rapid expansion of the internet, which has, in many respects, remade the entire world several times over.

America no longer has a competitive Tax Code. Instead, we have a Byzantine system with exceptionally high rates and an array of overlapping and often less-than-effective deductions, exclusions, and credits. This is not just a parade of horribles trotted out by Republicans, these problems have been acknowledged by a number of prominent Democrats, like Presidents Clinton and Obama, not to mention our current Senate minority leader and the ranking member of the Finance Committee, Senator WYDEN.

We all know the system is not working. Still, in many respects, we have politics as usual around here when we talk about tax reform. While both parties have supported reforms in the recent past, including a number of reforms that are included in the framework, we are already hearing the same, tired arguments that come up every time Republicans want to talk about tax reform.

According to the opponents of reform, our ''plan'' will cut taxes on the superrich. Our ''plan'' will raise taxes on the poor. Our ''plan'' will harm the middle class. Our ''plan'' is a giveaway to greedy corporations. These are some pretty odd claims given that as of right now, no completed ''plan'' exists. We have a framework, and we are not calling it that simply for PR reasons. We have some basic principles and targets that the leaders have agreed upon, but as the framework makes clear, the Finance and Ways and Means Committees have been tasked with filling in the details and writing legislation.

Here are just some of the details that are not included in the framework:

Income thresholds for individual tax brackets. The framework includes rate targets for three brackets, but the breakdown of those brackets is still to be determined.

The size of the enhanced Child Tax Credit. The framework anticipates an increase, but it does not specify an amount.