

She was going to be away from us for a month. I can remember I did everything I could to keep her from hearing the news that day, as the numbers of fatalities increased during the course of the day, because I didn't want her to leave us—she was about 12 at the time—with a sense of fear, the fear I felt and the country felt. I am so sorry my children and America's children have to grow up in a country where mass shootings are common, where we are beginning to see them just as part of our lives.

I heard somebody the other day on television say that is the price of freedom. What a shame that somebody would say that in the United States of America. What a surrender that represents to our children and to the victims of these crimes. I didn't grow up in that America, but conditions have changed. We have let it happen. The result is, we now have an entire generation of Americans—of our countrymen, our sons, and our daughters—who are growing up with a reasonable fear that they could be victims of a mass shooting or that their moms or their dads might not come home one day.

I think our kids have enough to worry about. They have every right to see a movie with their parents, to go dancing with their friends, or to see a concert on their one night off without having the fear of being shot down by people who have no business carrying such powerful weapons. They have a right to expect that this Congress will finally do something about gun violence in our country—violence which is far greater than anywhere else in the industrialized world.

In the wake of these horrific acts, as always, Americans spring into action. First responders secure the area and care for the wounded. Neighbors hold vigils to honor the victims and support grieving families. Journalists shed light on what happened and why. Citizens speak out to demand action from their elected officials. They are doing their jobs, and it is time for Congress to do ours.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator from West Virginia.

TAX REFORM

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, last week, I rose to talk about the importance of tax reform. I believe this is a policy issue we cannot talk about enough and that we cannot emphasize enough. So, today, I rise to talk about how important the reform is to our small businesses, and in the coming weeks, I will be up here to talk about other important aspects of tax reform.

We are all from different States and other parts of the country, but we all know small businesses are a major economic driver in our country, as 95 percent of businesses in the United States are small businesses, and that number is even higher in my State of West Virginia. Small businesses employ more than half of West Virginia's workforce.

Yet our small businesses face a marginal tax rate as high as 39.6 percent. At the same time, their effective tax rate can vary widely. In fact, a CNBC survey showed that 22 percent of small businesses cannot really say what their effective tax rate really is.

Think about that.

If you are a small business that is a partnership or an LLC, then your profits are going to pass through to you and be taxed at the individual rate. There are currently seven individual tax brackets. Then you have credits and deductions. There is also a self-employment tax, and the list goes on. On top of that, small businesses can have Social Security and Medicare taxes, a Federal unemployment tax, and employment taxes. That is not even taking into account taxes like a State-level income tax or property tax and more. That is why businesses and individuals spend billions of dollars a year to comply with the Tax Code. That is more than 18 hours for every man and woman and child in the United States of America. If I could give a visual here, that is basically 3 million people working full time on taxes for small businesses at a cost of \$195 billion.

The point is, it is complicated. Our Tax Code is too complicated, and that is part of what tax reform is about—simplifying the Tax Code. If Congress can simplify the Tax Code just to cut compliance costs in half, think of how many significant resources that would free up that would be better used to grow the economy, create jobs, raise wages, and expand businesses.

The National Federation of Independent Business, which represents 325,000 small businesses across this country, called this tax reform framework a good start, and it has urged us to take swift action. According to a survey by Paychex, 41 percent of small business owners want tax reform to be the very top priority.

Whom will these reforms really help? We are going to have a long discussion on this. This is just part of whom they will help. They will help the small businesses that employ so many people in my home State of West Virginia. They will help people like Eric Hott, of EH Chocolates & More, from Hampshire County. Eric has a great story. Eric grew up on a farm in Kirby, WV. His mother was from Hornberg, Germany. While growing up, his grandmother was always cooking something. After graduating from high school, Eric moved to Germany to begin a culinary apprenticeship. By 2006, he had a chef apprenticeship at a five-star hotel in Germany. He went on to serve at events like the G8 Summit and for guests that included the German Chancellor and his First Lady. After running a patisserie in Germany, he moved to Switzerland, where he refined and perfected the art of chocolate-making. That sounds good to me. Then what did he do? He wanted to come home. He returned home to West Virginia. He went back to Kirby, WV, and started his own

small businesses—first EH Chocolates & More and, later, Farm Fresh Produce. Both are growing and delicious businesses.

Small businesses employ middle-class Americans who power this and other small businesses across the country. We need more folks like Eric—lots more—who are willing to take the risk, who have a good idea, and who want to stay and work in their own homes in rural America and certainly in our State of West Virginia, which has had a major economic downturn. We need more Eric Hotts. We need to simplify the Tax Code for small businesses and let them focus on what they do best, which is refining their products, providing their services, and providing jobs for people in their various areas.

As much as any other policy that Congress can advance, tax reform will promote growth and provide job opportunities across this great country. Across the entire country, only two in five distressed communities have seen any job growth during the past 5 years. Fully 50 percent of U.S. job growth has occurred in just 2 percent of our country's counties.

We need to change that. We need to help small businesses that are major economic drivers in every part of our country. It is no wonder that small businesses have found it difficult to open, let alone succeed in many parts of our country. Because of our outdated Tax Code, real wages for most workers have barely increased for decades. By modernizing our Tax Code, we can create more opportunity and higher wages for Americans. We can achieve a simpler system with lower rates that is good for business and workers and, from the description I just put forward, would be a good time saver and resource saver.

The best thing about this in terms of small business is that it would lead to more jobs. Let's create an environment that leads to more investment in our States and continues to grow and build jobs. These are the changes hard-working West Virginians and Americans are hungering for. In order to make West Virginia the best place to live and work, now is the time for tax reform.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to make this a reality. Doing it will benefit so many—everyone in this country.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

(The remarks of Mr. FLAKE pertaining to the introduction of S. 1937 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. FLAKE. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING ELDER ROBERT D. HALES

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I rise today to honor the life of Elder Robert D. Hales, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Elder Hales passed away peacefully on Sunday, October 1, at the age of 85. He leaves behind his faithful wife Mary and their two sons, Stephen and David.

Robert Hales was born and raised in a faithful household in Long Island, NY. He was an all-American boy who played baseball through college at the University of Utah but eventually traded in his baseball uniform for a flight suit, serving in the U.S. Air Force as a jet fighter pilot. Elder Hales's service as a military aviator would inform the rest of his life and certainly his entire ministry. He took with him the unit motto displayed on the side of his aircraft: "Return With Honor."

After his discharge from the military, Elder Hales entered the world of international business. In jobs around the world, he established a reputation as an enthusiastic leader who relished a challenge and dealt fairly with others. Because of these qualities, Elder Hales rose to become president of Paper Mate, a division of Gillette. Later, he assumed senior executive positions at Max Factor Company, the Hughes Television Network, and Chesebrough-Pond's Manufacturing Company. But Elder Hales never let work dominate his life, as so many executives do. Despite the enormous demands on his time, he stayed faithful to the more important commitments he made to his family and to his Lord.

So it was that Robert Hales, a business executive of international renown, made an unusual decision in the prime of his life: He left the corporate world to give his all to the church. When Jesus said "Come, follow me," Robert Hales left his nets straightaway and became a fisher of men.

Elder Hales was called to become the presiding bishop of the church in 1985, overseeing the church's vast charitable network. As bishop, he used the skills of a business executive not for profit but to help the least of those among us.

In 1994, Elder Hales was sustained to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, a church position he held for 23 years until his passing just days ago. From this position as a watchman on the tower, he boldly proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and he also spoke out on such pressing societal issues as religious freedom. He saw that the erosion of religious belief in the United States was quickly devolving into social and political intolerance for religious people and institutions. But this prediction did not lead Elder Hales to despair, no; instead, he redoubled his efforts to edify the next generation—the young men and women who were in the preparatory period of life, as he termed it.

His addresses and sermons were full of moral exhortation and practical advice on living well. Don't walk, run to holiness, he urged his brothers and sisters in faith. Elder Hales knew that holiness is an activity, a pursuit to which we must consecrate our whole lives running the race and enduring to the end.

Through his example and through his words, Elder Hales taught that virtue is not just a good intention but a good deed reinforced and compounded by past deeds.

Elder Hales urged young men and women to embrace the joys of adulthood through marriage, child-rearing, and responsible citizenship. He knew that the way to true happiness lies in those sacrificial activities, not the selfish lifestyles that tempt so many today.

During one memorable address to the General Conference of the church, Elder Hales recounted the advice he received as a boy when he had been tempted to make a poor decision: "Robert," his father had said to him, "straighten up and fly right!" From the testimony of his life, it is clear that Elder Hales honored his father's advice in the Air Force, in the workforce, in the household, and in the church. Elder Robert D. Hales flew right. Now he has returned with honor to be embraced by his Heavenly Father.

Thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, I want to be able to give a quick update to this body on a conversation that started yesterday and has been ongoing for months about Russia and their interference in our elections and how they are trying to engage with us in a way that much of Europe has seen for decades but that we just haven't seen in the United States.

Yesterday, Senator BURR and Senator WARNER stood up and gave an update of where we are in the status of the investigation of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. They walked through some of the statistics. We have done over 100 interviews. We have 4,000 pages of transcript from those interviews. We have 100,000 documents that we have gone through so far, and there is more to go. We have completed some areas where we have interviewed everyone who we could possibly interview in that area. In other areas, as we do one interview, they quote a couple of other people, and we chase down those individuals, and it continues. So parts of the inves-

tigation are not done at this point, but some of it is.

Several aspects are clear from the investigation, though, again, it is not complete, and we will have a final document at the end. Some of the areas that are clear are that Russia was trying to use active measures to engage us in our last election. That part is very, very clear.

The question comes for many people: Why would they do that? Quite frankly, this is the way Russia has worked for a very long time—this asymmetric warfare they do where they try to constantly interfere in other people's thoughts and conflicts. They have done it across Europe for a long time. They are now doing it here.

Some of this is a product of Russia's having a very weak economy and trying to find some way to bolster themselves up. In the last 2 years, the Russian ruble has dropped 40 percent in value. As they struggle with low oil prices and struggle in the way they function with their government with the oligarchs and have a select group of people who can succeed and other folks who continue to struggle around the country and as they struggle under that system where they have fake elections and such, they try to reach out to other countries and try to interfere in our elections to make us look like them.

We have a free press that they try to engage in. We have free speech that they don't have in Russia. We have freedom of religion, which they don't have in Russia. We have the ability to be able to have disputes on political issues. They clearly don't have that in Russia. If you disagree with leadership in Russia, you will end up in prison. If you disagree with leadership in the United States, you will end up on TV. It is very different to be in an open society like ours. But they reach into what we consider a strength and try to make it our weakness.

We are going to try to get the facts out on this over the next several months as we work through this process. We are going to expose what Russia is really trying to do. Do they use some overt propaganda networks like Sputnik Radio and RT? Is their Russian propaganda on multiple cable and satellite channels throughout the United States? Their version of the facts are designed to create discord in our Nation. That is what they do.

They also have ways that are not quite as overt. They reach in on social media platforms. They have their trolls in Russia who have thousands of fake accounts on Facebook and Twitter and other social media apps. They use those thousands of apps to search around any news in America and find a place where there is conflict in America and then try to amp up the volume.

To be clear, the Russians are not creating conflict in America. We have plenty of it. We disagree on issues. Again, it is our free society. When we disagree on something, we disagree on