

and local deduction, are not likely to relocate in Buffalo or Rochester or Syracuse or Albany. It also hurts homeowners. Make no mistake about it—if we get rid of the State and local deduction, the values of homes will go down. That is why the realtors are so opposed to this elimination. It is not just true in New York or in California or in Connecticut or in New Jersey; it is true across the whole country.

As for my dear friend and chairman of the Finance Committee's State of Utah, because of the great charity of his people—and so many tithe—35 percent of the taxpayers will get a huge, huge increase in their taxes with the elimination of State and local deductibility. So many of them do not use the standard deduction because they are so charitable, but they are penalized for that charity.

Eliminating the State and local deduction, while slashing taxes for the wealthy and huge corporations, will hurt middle-class taxpayers.

Now there are some efforts to compromise State and local deductibility. They don't work. Some have proposed letting taxpayers make a choice between getting rid of the mortgage deduction and getting rid of the State and local deduction. That is like saying: Should I chop off my left hand or my right hand, Mr. Middle-Class Taxpayer?

Others have said: Let's limit it to people who earn below \$100,000. That still leaves lots of people at risk, particularly in high-priced areas like Long Island, and it doesn't reduce the deficit by much. It is estimated that a large percentage of the deficit will still go up.

It makes no sense to eliminate State and local deductibility. Vice President PENCE ought to go to western New York, but instead of going just to a small business—and we want to lower small business taxes—he should go to a middle-class family in Amherst or in Orchard Park or Tonawanda and tell them that he is there to raise their taxes.

#### NOMINATION OF TOM MARINO

Madam President, I want to address the President's nominee to lead the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Representative MARINO.

An article in yesterday's Washington Post described Representative MARINO's advocacy for a law that may have prevented the DEA, the Drug Enforcement Agency, from going after the worst practices of drug distributors. It is a profoundly troubling revelation about the man who has been tapped to lead the primary agency in our government that focuses on stopping the opioid crisis.

The opioid crisis was in part fueled by wholesale drug distributors sending millions of unnecessary pills into communities. As my friend Senator MANCHIN has pointed out, one company shipped 20 million doses of opioids to pharmacies in his State of West Virginia over a 5-year period. That in-

cluded 11 million doses sent to Mingo County, WV, where the population is 25,000. There were 11 million pills sent to a county of 25,000 people over a 5-year period. No wonder there is a crisis.

What the Washington Post revealed yesterday was that Representative MARINO worked to pass a bill in 2016 that made it "virtually impossible for the DEA to freeze suspicious narcotic shipments." Confirming Representative MARINO as our Nation's drug czar would be like putting a wolf in charge of the henhouse.

The American people deserve someone totally committed to fighting the opioid crisis, not someone who has labored on behalf of the drug industry. So tonight I am calling on President Trump to withdraw the nomination of Representative MARINO for the ONDCP. We can do better. Senator MANCHIN has made such a call, and he is right. President Trump ought to withdraw Representative MARINO's nomination.

If the President presses forward with Representative MARINO, it will be another betrayal in a long line of betrayals on issues near and dear to rural America. The President's healthcare proposals would have put daggers into the heart of rural America, decimating Medicaid and rural hospitals. The President's tax plan lavishes the wealthy and the big corporations but does little for the working man or woman in rural America. The President promised several months ago to label the opioid crisis a national emergency, yet he still hasn't done it. He said this afternoon that he will finally do it next week. We will see.

By now, the idea that the President is sticking up for the forgotten man and woman in the forgotten parts of rural America should be dismissed. President Trump seems to have forgotten the forgotten parts of America, and his lack of action—we don't need talk; we need action—on the opioid crisis and his nomination of Representative MARINO is just another example.

#### CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Madam President, over the weekend, several parts of California were swept by some of the most devastating wildfires the region has seen. At least 40 people have died, thousands of homes and businesses have been utterly destroyed, and at one point over 100,000 people were evacuated. As Gov. Jerry Brown said, "This is truly one of the greatest, if not the greatest, tragedies that California has ever faced."

Our thoughts are with everyone affected by these wildfires. We are enduringly grateful for the firefighters and all our first responders. And our response here in the Senate must be to send aid where aid is needed.

For our country, this has been a devastating few months of fires and floods. Hurricanes Harvey and Irma buffeted Texas, Louisiana, and Florida. Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are contending with a humanitarian crisis on an unprecedented scale in the wake

of Hurricane Maria. Our job is to speedily send aid, and I am hopeful that we can pass another supplemental aid package this week as well as another more comprehensive package later in the year.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip is recognized.

#### TAX REFORM AND THE BUDGET

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, today I want to talk to you about time and how little of it we have to accomplish two incredibly important legislative priorities, one that is national in scope and potentially historic in impact. The first of those priorities is tax reform. We have a target date on the calendar, and now the clock is ticking. We have to get to work.

The budget resolution that we will consider this week sets November 13 as our deadline for the Finance Committee to report a bill, and of course the distinguished chairman of the Finance Committee, Senator HATCH, is on the floor, and that is a commitment I know he takes very seriously.

This bill, I hope, will broadly cut taxes on individuals and businesses alike and put more money in the pockets of working families across the country. What I like most about the plan I have seen so far is that it is bold. We are not trimming a little here and a tiny bit there. We are slashing rates, consolidating brackets, and eliminating pet credits and deductions. This is not JV tax reform. This is tax reform that is serious and based upon our commitment to get the economy growing again.

Two weeks ago, the House approved its version of the resolution, and the Senate Budget Committee reported out its version. Now the Senate will consider the committee's resolution in the coming days. Why do we need that budget resolution? How is this all going to work?

Well, these resolutions from each Chamber are the first step in passing pro-growth tax reform. They authorize the use of a tool called budget reconciliation. That means when the tax reform legislation is considered, it can't be stopped by less than a majority of the Senate. Of course, this isn't our first choice.

I wish our colleagues across the aisle, our Democratic friends, would join us in bipartisan tax reform, but passing a budget resolution in the Senate is a must because this is something we can hold in reserve if our friends across the aisle simply refuse to participate in the process of pro-growth tax reform. It is a key procedural step because we have to fundamentally change the Tax Code before the end of the year.

How well our economy does next year, how many jobs are created, and how much investment occurs here in the United States will depend largely upon our success in passing pro-growth tax reform this year. The clock is ticking, and we have to act with dispatch and with determination.

As the President said last week in Pennsylvania, “we want lower taxes, bigger paychecks, and more jobs for . . . American workers.” He is absolutely right. Lower taxes, bigger paychecks, and more jobs are the things we all ought to want, and they are worth the fight.

Under this administration we are already seeing results. The economy is bouncing back. Unemployment is at a 16-year low. Wages are rising and the stock market is soaring. The slumbering giant, which is the U.S. economy, is now slowly awakening. Our economy reached more than 3.1 percent growth last quarter. Confidence, as the President stressed in Pennsylvania, is back when it comes to our economy and our future, but that confidence will not last long if we let this opportunity pass.

We have to find ways to get companies to stay in America, to expand, and to hire in America. We have to find ways to take the money out of Washington’s pocket and put it back into the pockets of those who earned the money in the first place—American families.

We have to find ways to simplify the Tax Code, which, let’s remember, hits families multiple times each year by taking their earnings, by stealing their time through compliance, and by trying their patience with complexity. Each tax return feels like three.

I find it appalling that a majority of taxpayers are forced to pay someone else to do their taxes for them because they simply don’t have the time or expertise to do it themselves.

The unified framework released a few weeks ago will help. It calls for collapsing seven separate tax brackets down to three. That is what I call simplification. It expands the zero bracket so that if you are a married couple earning less than \$24,000 a year, you will pay zero income taxes. It enhances the child tax credit. It repeals the death tax and special interest tax breaks, and it reduces the uncompetitive corporate tax rate to 20 percent and cuts tax rates for small businesses to the lowest level in more than 80 years. So let’s make this happen before time runs out.

#### HURRICANE RECOVERY EFFORT

Madam President, the other item I can’t stop thinking about is one that has taken a great toll on my State and our region of the country, and that is Hurricane Harvey, the most extreme rain event in the history of the United States. Literally 50 inches of rain fell in 5 days in the Houston area.

Last week, I saw images of the Texas World Speedway, a racecar track at College Station that is being used as a processing lot. Here is a picture of that.

At its peak, tens of thousands of cars were parked there, awaiting damage assessments by insurance companies. A sea of them had filled the entire speedway, as can be seen on this chart, and it was starting to spill into sur-

rounding areas, too—cars in all directions, as far as the eye could see.

How could Hurricane Harvey damage so many cars? Well, cars these days—the newer ones—are basically computers on wheels, and when they get wet in an extreme flooding event like this, they essentially become a total loss, like these cars at the Texas World Speedway. It is an amazing picture. All the cars there, mind you, represent only a tiny percentage of all the vehicles damaged in the storm. Some of the estimates I have heard are that as high as one-half million personal vehicles were damaged and even totaled.

The speedway is just one of the images that continue to keep me up at night. How are my constituents, these Texans, going to get to work? How are they going to take their kids to school? When will their car and their house be ready so they can live in their home? When will their highways and driveways be fixed? What is being done to ensure that history doesn’t repeat itself when, year after year, many parts of the Harris County-Houston area are flooded because many of the important Corps of Engineer projects have not been started, much less completed, which would have diverted the rain and saved many of these homes and many of these cars.

Last Thursday, the House passed a \$36.5 billion hurricane and wildfire relief bill. The vote sends the measure over to the Senate, and I look forward to debating the supplemental appropriation in the days ahead.

The House’s emergency measure is intended to replenish the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s nearly depleted coffers with \$18.7 billion to the Disaster Relief Fund. If we don’t act soon, I am told, FEMA could run out of money as early as October 23.

The House bill will also address the National Flood Insurance Program by forgiving \$16 billion of its debt and allowing it to pay more claims for property owners in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

Nevertheless, I must say I am more than a little bit disappointed by this piece of legislation. I share the frustrations of Gov. Greg Abbott and Members of the Houston area congressional delegation, who have pointed out that this bill doesn’t come close to fulfilling the very reasonable requests that have been made to rebuild and recover from Hurricane Harvey. Texas needs more, and the State deserves it, too, after all it has gone through. We are not going to throw up our hands and relent. We are going to keep on pushing.

I appreciate the assurances from Speaker PAUL RYAN and the administration that Texas will get what it needs to rebuild the homes and businesses lost in the hurricane and the funding that it needs to expand bayous and develop critical flood mitigation projects.

Governor Abbott told me the Speaker told him Congress will take up the

State’s recent request as soon as November. I am grateful to him for that promise, but we don’t need any more general statements of support. We are not asking for any more expressions of sympathy. We need specifics and a specific commitment to follow through on Texas’s demonstrated need for assistance.

I predict that the House bill will not move through the Senate until the bill provides the sort of specific commitment we could take to the bank. This isn’t about Hurricane Harvey either. This is about Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria.

We cannot afford to wait much longer. The Texas families who have been out of their homes since Hurricane Harvey hit can’t afford to wait much longer. The people who have lost their mode of transportation as a result of this flood and this hurricane can’t afford to wait much longer. The small businesses that have been simply wiped out and who have been denied access to the funds they need in order to restart and rebuild their lives cannot afford to wait much longer.

The clock is ticking, and I will continue to work with the Governor and the rest of the Texas delegation, as well as our friends from Florida and others who were hit by other natural disasters, to make sure that collectively we present our case to the Appropriations Committees and to the Senate. We are not asking to be treated any better than anybody else after a natural disaster like this, but we sure will not accept being treated worse. We are going to work together, on a bipartisan basis, to make sure that is the case.

Let me just close with a few words from my good friend and colleague from Laredo, TX, Representative HENRY CUELLAR. Now, Henry is what they call a Blue Dog Democrat, somebody I have worked with a lot on border issues in particular. He is on the House Appropriations Committee, and he was asked whether the House’s most recent bill was going to be the final appropriation to address the losses as a result of Hurricanes Harvey, Maria, or Irma. “No,” he said emphatically, “we are going to do more,” and he is absolutely right.

I am here to say that speaking as one Senator, I intend to make sure the U.S. Government keeps its commitments to the people in Texas, to the people in Florida, to the people in Puerto Rico, and to the people in the Virgin Islands when it comes to assisting them to recover from this terrible natural disaster.

We are not going to continue to take the promises of the Office of Management and Budget or the administration or our friends in the leadership in the House, for that matter, that we are going to get to this later. There is an expression in my part of the country that when somebody asks you when are you going to do something, the response is manana—tomorrow. To every question of when, it is manana.