

to take more money out of Washington's pockets and put more in yours.

With this budget, we are on a path to delivering much needed relief to American individuals and families who have borne the burdens of an unfair tax code for entirely too long. I want to particularly thank Chairman MIKE ENZI and the members of the Budget Committee and the staff for their extraordinary work on this budget.

BANKRUPTCY JUDGESHIP ACT OF 2017

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany H.R. 2266.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the House agree to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2266) entitled "An Act to amend title 28 of the United States Code to authorize the appointment of additional bankruptcy judges; and for other purposes.", with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 2266.

CLOTURE MOTION

I send a cloture motion to the desk on the motion to concur.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 2266.

Mitch McConnell, Pat Roberts, Roy Blunt, Shelley Moore Capito, Mike Rounds, John Thune, Orrin G. Hatch, Deb Fischer, Cory Gardner, John Barasso, Johnny Isakson, John Boozman, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr, James M. Inhofe, Roger F. Wicker, Lindsey Graham.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 1568

Mr. McCONNELL. I move to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 2266, with a further amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McCONNELL] moves to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 2266, with an amendment numbered 1568.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

At the end add the following:

"This Act shall take effect 1 day after the date of enactment."

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on the motion to concur with amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 1569 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1568

Mr. McCONNELL. I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 1569 to amendment No. 1568.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike "1 day" and insert "2 days"

MOTION TO REFER WITH AMENDMENT NO. 1570

Mr. McCONNELL. I move to refer the House message on H.R. 2266 to the Committee on Appropriations with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered 1570.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McCONNELL] moves to refer the message to accompany H.R. 2266 to the Committee on Appropriations with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered 1570.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end add the following:

"This Act shall take effect 3 days after the date of enactment."

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on my motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 1571

Mr. McCONNELL. I have an amendment to the instructions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 1571 to the instructions of the motion to refer.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike "3 days" and insert "4 days"

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 1572 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1571

Mr. McCONNELL. I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 1572 to amendment No. 1571.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike "4" and insert "5"

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

THANKING SENATOR ENZI AND THE BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND STAFF

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I want to take a few minutes following the remarks of the majority leader to thank Chairman ENZI, the bill manager, and the whole Budget Committee for the tremendous work that has been done on this budget resolution.

I also want to express my gratitude and our collective gratitude to the Budget Committee staff, who has done such heroic work to get us this far. This might well be the best and most well-run budget consideration process during my time in the Senate. Certainly, for the fact that Senator ENZI has gotten us to this point at this time of night, when typically this ends in the wee hours of the morning, I think he is to be commended.

The resolution has gone through regular order from the start, working its way through the Budget Committee where amendments were considered and adopted from both sides. Chairman ENZI has been a very effective floor manager as we have been considering the budget resolution, obtaining consensus from both sides of the aisle to ensure that the Senate has considered a number of amendments in a timely fashion. That is something that is not always so common around here.

I want to take a moment to note the great job the chairman has done in getting us to this point. As we all know, without a budget resolution, there will be no tax reform. This is the first step to getting us to pro-growth tax reform, which will unshackle the sleeping giant of the American economy, something from which all Americans will benefit.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

THE BUDGET

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, having been away for a while from the Senate, I am pretty amazed to come back today and see a budget that is passed that throws away years of rhetoric about fiscal conservatism. The Senate just passed a budget that adds \$1.5 trillion to our national debt, a budget that slashes seniors' healthcare by \$473 billion. It decimates the Medicaid Program for parents and grandparents in nursing homes, those who are disabled, and those who are among the poorest, with cuts of over \$1 trillion over the next decade.

In total, the Republican budget would cut more than \$5 trillion over the next decade from education, healthcare, affordable housing, childcare, nutrition assistance, transportation, and other programs that all Americans rely on.

The question many New Jerseyans will be asking me is, Why? Why do Republicans in Congress add \$1.5 trillion

to our national debt while slashing the Medicare Program? The answer is simple. We are on a pathway to provide massive tax breaks to corporate interests, special interests, and the wealthiest 1 percent. This has been a Republican agenda for as long as I can remember.

What I find most galling is that this budget plan is meant to set up a special process that we know here as reconciliation to pass the Trump tax plan—a plan, which, by which their own admission, will raise taxes on middle-class families. Think about that. The Republican Party is adding \$1.5 billion to the debt to pay for massive tax breaks for the wealthiest among us—I should say trillion, \$1.5 trillion to the debt to pay for massive tax breaks for the wealthiest among us. They aren't even guaranteeing that middle-class taxes will not go up.

What the Republican budget fails to realize is that budgets are not just about numbers. Budgets are about people, their hopes, their dreams, their expectations for a better life for themselves and their children.

My view is that this budget sells America short. It is not what the American people believe our collective values would be. Hard-working families want us to work together and pass a budget that addresses their concerns. They want safe communities, not a budget that threatens to cut the firefighter grants and stretches local budgets even thinner. They want peace of mind when they reach their golden years, not a budget that raises their healthcare costs. They want a tax proposal that cuts taxes for the middle class and working people, not more tax breaks for the folks that have been rigging the system against us.

People are willing to do their part if everyone is sharing in the sacrifice. But this budget fails that test. It fails to recognize that we are all in this together and should benefit together and sacrifice together—each of us working for the betterment of all of us.

Mr. President, another area where it is critical that we come together, not as 50 separate States but as the United States of America, is to help the 3.5 million American citizens living in Puerto Rico. I have serious concerns that the current disaster relief package currently being considered by Congress falls far short of that.

Tomorrow will mark 1 month since Hurricane Maria devastated the island of Puerto Rico, leaving in its wake a trail of destruction, despair, and suffering. It is 1 month later, and still 88 percent of our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico don't have power. It is 1 month later, and still one-third of the island lacks access to clean, safe drinking water.

Outside of the city of San Juan, the situation is even worse, as nearly two-thirds of people still remain without water. Let me just pause for a moment to think about that. Think about it: an entire month without clean water,

without water to bathe, to cook with, or simply to drink. How many of us can even imagine such an existence? More than half of the island's cell towers are down, which is not just an inconvenience. It is a threat to safety. Imagine the sense of isolation and desperation when your power is out, when you have run out of potable water, with none on the way, and you can't even call for help.

As bad as it looks on TV, the situation on the ground, as I saw it, is tragically worse. I am concerned that the package we are considering now is both inadequate in scope and unfair in treatment—inadequate because it is just a fraction of what Puerto Rico needs to recover, unfair because it treats the people of Puerto Rico different than Florida and Texas, even though they are U.S. citizens.

While all three areas have been devastated by natural disasters, only Puerto Rico is being required to pay back natural disaster assistance. That is right. Unlike Florida and Texas, the majority of Puerto Rico's assistance is coming in the form of a loan. While there are a lot of things that the people of Puerto Rico need from their Federal Government, one thing they absolutely do not need and simply cannot afford is billions of dollars of more debt.

This is not a normal disaster loan. No. Just like everything else with Puerto Rico, this loan comes with a major stipulation. While disaster loans are normally forgiven according to a standard formula under the Stafford Act, this package overrules long-standing law and leaves the decision entirely in the hands of the Secretaries of the Treasury and Homeland Security.

While disaster loans are normally used to help people be safe and start the recovery process, this legislation gives the Secretaries of the Treasury and Homeland Security the authority to control how Puerto Rico spends the money. If Secretary Mnuchin decides that some, most, or even all of the loan should be used to pay off his friends on Wall Street, there is nothing Puerto Rico can do to stop him. If he decides that debt bondholders are more important than those who are suffering in darkness, there is nothing they can do to stop him. Instead of being treated like the rest of the country, Puerto Rico is left at the mercy of Treasury Secretary Mnuchin. They are at the mercy of someone who made his fortune off the backs of seniors and hard-working families who lost their homes in the foreclosure crisis.

Do we really think that someone who callously rejected the pleas of struggling families to save their homes and instead put them on the fast track to foreclosure is going to suddenly change now for the 3.5 million American citizens in Puerto Rico? Does anyone really believe he is going to put the people of Puerto Rico first? What a tragedy it would be if, instead of helping our most vulnerable citizens, this loan was used

to pay off, in whole or in part, vulture funds. We need people saved, not bondholders.

We need a response that answers Puerto Rico's call. Instead of continuing to treat Puerto Rico like a foreign country and make them start a tab at the U.S. Treasury while they are vulnerable and pleading for help, we need to treat them just like their fellow American citizens in Florida and Texas. We need to provide unconditional assistance—real dollars to rebuild roads, the electrical grid, and to put people back in their homes and businesses. We need to address the massive Medicaid cliff that is forcing even more doctors and nurses off the island and threatening the health of the people of Puerto Rico. We need strong protections to make sure that the disaster relief stays with the people of Puerto Rico, where it is needed the most.

Let me close by saying that I grew up believing the United States was the greatest country the world had ever seen. I still believe that today as strongly as ever. Ultimately, our response as it relates to the people of Puerto Rico is not just about the people of Puerto Rico but about all of us. It is about our values—who we are as a people, who we are as a nation. How we respond to this crisis will test the collective conscience of our Nation, and it will define us.

As I have said many times, I have never shied away from voting for assistance for flooding in Mississippi, for wildfires in the West, for hurricanes like Katrina, and any other natural disaster that has faced our country with our fellow Americans. I was amazed when I had to struggle and fight here on the Senate floor for the first time—I don't know—in my lifetime to get assistance in the New York-New Jersey area after Superstorm Sandy. It took a major fight, with people voting no, even though I had always voted yes.

The people of Puerto Rico do not have a U.S. Senator to cast their vote for them or to raise their voices for them. Yet, as long as I am a Member of this Chamber, I am going to continue to prick the conscience of the Senate to understand that when we walk to the Vietnam wall and see those names, a disproportionate number of them are Americans of Puerto Rican descent, who wore the uniform, gave their lives, and made the ultimate sacrifice. They did not leave the conflict early; they gave it their all. We cannot leave them early, nor should we leave them short.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

THE BUDGET

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I am going to contain my remarks to the budget and its process.

For several days—in fact, for several weeks—I have been listening to the same rhetoric of what this budget will do. This budget is a special process. It

does outline a plan for what we can do over 10 years. That is a long time. I don't know that we ever make it past the first year. In fact, some budgets do not last more than 40 days before we waive the budget, but we need to have a blueprint. This is a blueprint that covers 10 years in spite of some of the rhetoric that this bill will not do any of the things that have been claimed. The reason that it will not do any of the things that have been claimed is that everything in the budget requires action by another committee before it can be done. Maybe they will take what we have in the budget and do that. Usually, they do not. If they were to, we could balance it, in this case, over a 10-year period. That is too long. Interest is going to eat us alive before that time. We are going to have to do something else.

I remember, when President Obama came into office, he had an idea. He said that the economy was too sluggish, so he was going to do a stimulus bill. Here, they are complaining about this \$1.5 trillion that, perhaps, might be part of the flexibility for doing tax reform. We did more than that in the stimulus, and it did not work and went into the hands of a few people. Some of it never did get used. Some of it went to very few people. It was supposed to go to shovel-ready projects. Some of those projects have not been done yet, so that did not work.

We have had a slow economy. In fact, it seemed to have been slowing down, not speeding up, until last November. Last November, people showed a sign of hope, and the economy started going the other way. It is reflected in the stock market and some of the commodity prices because they felt that those could be produced again.

We decided that we had to try a different approach, and the different approach was to try to put the money in the hands of hard-working Americans. That is the middle class that some of the people talk about, and it is the poor that some of the people talk about. It is everybody. When we do tax reform, it will affect everybody. In fact, there are even some studies that show that when you do the corporate tax, it increases money for individuals who are working because there will be more competition for people, and that will drive up wages. Some economists have pointed that out. Yet, rather than argue with the Congressional Budget Office about how much the change is going to be, we said: No. Go ahead. Do your static one just as though no change had been made at all. We are willing to bet that there will be a very slight increase that will cover what we are talking about as a possible deficit and that that deficit will not develop if we increase just a very small amount in productivity.

Just about every economist asked: How come you are picking such a low number? Well, we try to be conservative and hope that the number goes 4 or 5 or 6 points higher than that. If it

does, we will have money to start paying back some of the debt. If it just stays at my estimated, conservative amount, at the end of 10 years, we will have a surplus of \$197 billion.

We have a chance to put America on a different route, one that will increase jobs, one that will get the money into the hands of the people, realizing that they probably know better what to do for themselves and their families than we do.

I do hear a lot when I go home about different government programs that are not working. In my studies, I have found that we not only have programs that are not working but that we have programs that nobody ever takes a look at. We have programs that have a lot of duplication. We have 160 housing programs. There are really only 5 things that those 160 programs do, so shouldn't we have just 5 of them and maybe have them specifically and all under one agency and set some goals and see if they meet those goals?

I was visiting with a lady from Africa who happens to be in charge of finance in her country. She said: You know, we have performance contracts in our country, and a performance contract means that everybody, including the towns, does a list of what they are going to get done during the year.

Because they are smaller than the United States, once a year they get everybody together who has a performance contract, and everybody reviews his performance contract. If you do not meet your performance contract, there is a little bit of public embarrassment; whereas we do not even check to see if they did anything. We do not even check to see if they have plans. We have to change that, and some of the things in this budget will allow that to happen.

I appreciate the way that we finished up in committee. I allowed the other side to see the budget early. Normally, they get to see it after opening statements are done. Imagine that—do the opening statement about what you think is going to be in the budget. Although some of the speakers I have heard around here act like they are still thinking that something might be in the budget that is not, they got to see it 5 days early in exchange for submitting their amendments, which is what every other committee does. Submit the amendments early, and then we can look through them and see how much duplication there is and some that can be accepted from both sides. As a result, we started with over 150 amendments, and we voted on 25. We took five from the other side, making it a bipartisan budget.

Nevertheless, after the committee process, we brought it to the floor, and we had an open amendment process today. In fact, as for the way the rules are on this, after we voted on the last amendment—of course, before we voted on final passage—somebody could have said: Wait a minute, I have one more, and he could have gone on all night.

Again, we had to think of a civil process today that would result in our being able to finish at what would be considered an extremely early hour.

There was a little different tone to the amendments than what I had seen before—I think people will agree with that—which was that they were focused on the actual items in the budget, not on “gotcha” amendments. Usually, they say: Well, that person is up, and he has this little soft spot, so if I throw in this amendment, he will be on record, probably, having to vote against it, or he will vote for it, and that can be used against him. Either way, they would be able to use it. I didn't see those amendments this time, and I appreciate that.

I appreciate my colleagues for their consideration, their cooperation, and a lot of patience that has gotten us to this point.

I thank Leader MITCH MCCONNELL for allowing the Senators to do their jobs, to do them in committee, and to do them here on the Senate floor. This commitment to an open, honest, and transparent legislative process is crucial to helping Congress restore the trust of the American people.

I also owe thanks to the outstanding members of the Senate Budget Committee, who fought so hard and so tenaciously to outline a plan that could balance the budget over the next 10 years while providing the tools needed to reform our Tax Code and boost the economy. The Presiding Officer was a part of that committee, and the Senator who just finished presiding was a part of that committee. I appreciate the careful and calculated way they looked at it, provided suggestions, then asked good questions at hearings and helped to come up with that budget.

Thanks are due, as well, to the many Members on this side who came and spoke on the budget's behalf, who offered amendments to make it better—well, almost always to make it better—and who worked with each of us and each other to move through the resolution's debate and the vote process together.

I would also like to focus for a moment on some of the staff who helped to lead us here. I want to thank the Republican staff of the Senate Budget Committee. That is Betsy McDonnell, my staff director, who is relatively new to the position, but you would never know that in the way she took ahold with her knowledge and friendship among people, again, on both sides of the aisle. She has been able to work some wonders to where we had the least votes in a vote-arama that, I think, we have ever had. That came from her being able to combine some of them but also in helping them redraft so that they were covering a different area than somebody else might be covering, which eliminated some of the repetition.

I want to thank my deputy staff director, Matt Giroux, and Paul Vinovich, Becky Cole, Thomas Fuller,

Elizabeth Keys, Joe Brenckle, Jim Neill, Steve Robinson, Greg D'Angelo, Tom Borck, Richard Berger, Jeremy Dalrymple, David Ditch, Susan Eckerly, Alison McGuire, Will Morris, Steve Townsend, Kelsie Wendelberger, and our interns Catherine Konieczny, Jake Whitaker, and Matt Pfeiffer. They are quite a team that has been doing a lot of work, both daytime and night and while the Senate has been out of session.

So I would also like to offer a special thank-you to Eric Ueland, who previously served as my staff director. He has been nominated for a post within the administration, and he is still waiting for his vote here, which is being delayed a lot—not just on his but apparently on all of them.

Eric has played an important role on this committee and throughout his time in the Senate. Two years ago, Eric was instrumental in helping Congress approve its first balanced 10-year budget since 2001, which represented an important step toward putting our country on not just another course but a better course. He is careful, precise, and dogged in his work. He has a tremendous knowledge of the history of the Senate and particularly the budget process. I especially appreciate his understanding of the complex Senate rules and precedents, along with the Budget Act. I wish him Godspeed in his next position in service to our great Nation.

As well, thanks are due to my personal office staff who have to carry a load because I am not there when I am working on the budget stuff, but they keep me well informed so we are progressing on some of the State stuff at the same time. I particularly have to thank my chief of staff, Tara Shaw, who, because a new administration came in and liked the employees I had working for me, hired many of them away and we had to find replacements and she did an outstanding job with that. She has helped to kind of hold me together during this whole process and gives me outstanding advice so that I know not only what I am doing but why I am doing it, and, again, she has a tremendous history of what I have done before, which helps me as a good reminder. She is an outstanding chief of staff.

I also want to include my legislative director, Landon Stropko. When you are the budget chairman and you are worried about some of the numbers, you can give the legislative director a heart attack because as budget director you have to vote against some things that have some unusual numbers to it, but it might be something people in Wyoming are interested in. We were able to resolve some of those conflicts. I always support Wyoming, as I mentioned. For anything that happens in the budget process, there is another process that will actually require some votes to finish up anything that is in there, and we will see that everything in there comes out in Wyoming's

favor as well as for the rest of the Nation. I am not trying to do anything partial just to our part of the country, although a lot of things I work on have to do with very rural places. We are the least populated State in the Nation, but we are also the biggest State in the Nation so we have a lot of open space to invite people to.

I also want to thank Bart Massey, Liz Schwartz, Natalia Riggin, Aniela Butler, Charlie Carroll, Shawna Newsome, Garnett Decosimo, Chris Lydon, Aron Wehr, and Dylan Mitchell. I want to thank my Communications Director, Coy Knobel, our press team, Max D'Onofrio and Rachel Vliem, and the rest of the Wyoming team.

I have a bunch of people in Wyoming who primarily work on casework and do an outstanding job doing that.

I also want to thank the Budget Committee's bipartisan staff: Kim Proctor, Katie Smith, George Woodall, Grace Bruno, and Kevin Walsh, as well as Celina Inman, who has been on loan to us from the Government Publishing Office. You can tell around here it takes a lot of government printing.

We have also been supported by the great work of our leadership, the floor and cloak room staff. I thank them for their continued good work and dedication to this institution and the country as a whole.

In particular, I want to thank Sharon Soderstrom, Hazen Marshall, Jane Lee, and Brendan Dunn in the leader's office; Monica Popp, John Chapuis, and Emily Kirlin in the whip's office; and very especially Laura Dove, who really runs this place. She has a history from when her dad was the Parliamentarian, and I am sure there was dinner table talk that has led her to know a lot of the precedents. I have seen when somebody disagreed with her, she was able to just go over and pull out a manual and turn almost instantly to the page and say: Here it is. She does an outstanding job of helping us stay on the right track. I also thank Robert Duncan, Chris Tuck, Megan Mercer, Tony Hanagan, Mike Smith, Katherine Kilroy, and Chloe Barz in the cloakroom.

I would really be remiss if I didn't thank the Senate Parliamentarian, Elizabeth MacDonough, and her team, along with our bill and amendment clerks who kept us on the straight and narrow, but I particularly want to point out our Senate Parliamentarian who has to go through the technical details of every sentence of everything we do. When you talk about a filing cabinet of ideas all contained in one place, she does it. She knows precedent. She has been working at it for a long time. To be Parliamentarian, you have to be somebody who really likes detail work and pressure because when somebody comes in, they don't say: Take a look at this, and maybe I will see what you think next week. No, they want to know right now what you think, and fortunately she is able to, with a very great personality, say: Not yet, and then she does her research and

comes up with some great explanations—not ones we always agree with—but great explanations for any decision she makes, and we really appreciate that.

So you can see that it takes a whole lot of people, and I haven't had a chance to get the list of the people from the other side of the aisle who have been working on, in some cases countering what we are doing and keeping their people informed, but that is the Senate; that is, there are all these people behind the scenes who are helping to make it work and to do it right. That is important. We want to do it right.

Now, I think we could work together a lot better if we were able to work in smaller bites. I get a little upset when we do comprehensive stuff around here. I have watched so many times when we take a comprehensive bill and soundly defeat it or maybe narrowly defeat it, but we defeat it. I figured out, when we do something that ought to be in separate bites, that this piece loses 5 votes and this piece loses 10 votes and this piece loses 12 votes, and pretty quickly you don't have a majority anymore, but if you do it in smaller bites, you may lose 5 votes, lose 12 votes, and it isn't a big deal. Getting it done would be the big deal. So if people would settle for working one issue and sticking to that issue and not say: No, I have this amendment that I know nobody will like, but this is such an important bill, if I could get it in there, it will make it through and hardly anybody will know—that is not legislating, and we shouldn't be operating that way. We should be doing an item at a time, in bite sizes, so the American people can understand it, and we get it done.

I think a lot of people have done a great job here, including the pages. It is late, so rather than go on—I made it to after 10 p.m. so you don't have to have class tomorrow morning. With that, I will close.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Ohio.

TAX REFORM

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, as we have just seen, there is no more decent or honest Senator in the U.S. Senate than the Senator from Wyoming who just spoke, and that is why we were able to expedite the process tonight. It may seem like we are here late, but, frankly, we all expected to be here until 2 or 3 or 4 in the morning, and instead we worked things out. He is an example of why we did, both in committee and on the floor. Senator ENZI was able to work with people, be fair, honest, and that pays off. It gave everybody a fair shot.

I will also say he has produced a budget that does balance, which I think most Americans agree with. As he said so well, the budget is a framework. So the budget itself does not have the specific policies in it. In fact, those have to go to other committees to be passed and then will be passed by

the full Senate and the House and signed into law by the President.

What it does do is it prepares this body to do something really important and really exciting, and that is the opportunity to reform our broken Tax Code. It is so important because it will give us a shot in the arm, in terms of our economy. It will get this economy moving again, and it is going to help people who have been left behind in this economy. Really, when we look over the past 15 years, so many people whom I represent and who are represented by the other Members in this Chamber have not seen their wages go up. In fact, they have been flat, and what has gone up are expenses—healthcare expenses more than any, frankly. It is the biggest single increase people see in their family budget but also food, medicine, and tuition. We have seen flat wages, not more take-home pay, and higher expenses.

What we have an opportunity to do in this tax reform bill—that is a framework, not a mandate—that was made possible by the budget that was passed tonight is we have set the stage for commonsense tax reform that is essential to this effort to grow our economy and create more and better jobs and increased wages for middle-class Americans.

We heard a lot of discussion about it adding to the deficit. I will just add to what has been said already. If we do this tax reform right, it will not add to the deficit. In fact, I strongly believe it will reduce the deficit over the next 10 years. Why do I say that?

I am going to talk for a second about some of the things that are in good pro-growth tax reform that we are planning to implement that will actually grow the economy that will result in more economic activity and more revenue coming into the Treasury.

If you assume, as the Congressional Budget Office does, that we are only going to grow this economy 1.9 percent, which is a pretty paltry amount over the next 10 years—way below what the average has been for the past 30 years—then let's say all this tax reform we are doing only grows the economy by a little bit more. Let's say .4 percent. So instead of 1.9 percent, let's grow the economy at 2.3 percent. That is a conservative estimate, I believe, based on the kinds of things we are talking about. That will mean we actually not only have a revenue-neutral tax proposal, but we begin paying back some of the national debt by having the deficit, once again, as it was in the years 2000 and 2001, be on a unified basis at a zero deficit.

This is an exciting opportunity to help people be able to seek their goals in life but also to actually help with regard to the budget deficit. I agree with the chairman on that. I think we have an opportunity, if we do the right tax relief, to really help to get the budget deficit down.

How does this comprehensive tax reform help the middle class? We talked

a little bit about this today. Some offered amendments. I offered one with regard to the business tax side of things, but I think it does it in three ways. First, it immediately helps the family budget by cutting middle-class taxes. So everything that has been laid out in terms of the proposals tonight on the tax side, we can talk about the fact that for families who are working families in this country who are making \$30, \$40, \$50, \$60,000 a year, those folks will see a reduction in their taxes which will help the family budget.

The Tax Code, of course, is very complicated, too burdensome. One thing we are proposing is to double the standard deduction. That means for people who take the deduction now—and about two-thirds of the people I represent do—they will be able to have a doubling of that, from \$12,000 for a family to up to \$24,000 for a family. That is a 0 tax bracket for the first \$24,000 in income. That is significant middle-class tax relief.

Second, we are going to expand the child tax credit. That is really important, not just to provide relief but to help families with kids be able to afford childcare.

Finally, we will adjust the bracket so people who are beyond the standard deduction, double or nothing, and who don't take advantage of the child tax credit also get tax relief.

So these are ways in which folks are going to see immediate help for the family budget, but it is more than that. It is more than that.

I think, frankly, the most significant part of this reform is going to be giving the economy that shot in the arm and helping to increase jobs and improve wages. That is going to happen, I think, through the business tax relief that we have talked about. First, with regard to smaller companies, the so-called passthrough companies, about three-quarters of the companies in America pay their taxes as individuals. This is the corner drugstore; this is the small manufacturing business in your town. Those folks are going to see a reduction in their taxes on their business income so they can invest more in that business and create more jobs, and a lot of the growth is going to come from these smaller businesses. That is the 25-percent rate people are talking about as compared to, say, a 35-percent or higher rate for individuals. That is something that is fair, in part because we are also going to lower the rates for people who are in the larger businesses.

These are the C corporations that are being talked about. That rate has to come down. If it does not, America will continue to lose jobs and investment overseas, and that is what is happening right now.

Just in the last 24 hours, another major American company announced that they are inverting; in other words, they are going overseas. Why? Because of the Tax Code. It is amazing that the Tax Code that this Congress is responsible for improving is so bad that peo-

ple are actually voting with their feet and leaving the country and taking jobs and investment with them. We have done research on this, we have had investigations on this, and we know what is happening. We know, as an example, that because of our Tax Code, there are almost 5,000—4,700 companies just in the last 13 years that have become foreign companies that otherwise would be American companies. Think about that. That is the Ernst & Young study we recently saw. This is amazing. We know for a fact that it is not just about these companies leaving America and going to other countries and doing these so-called inversions—becoming a foreign company—but it is also foreign companies coming here and taking over U.S. companies, and, again, what is happening here is that jobs and investment are going overseas.

Why is this? Well, it is for a couple of reasons. One is that American companies now have the highest tax rate in all of the industrialized world. So the 35-percent tax rate you hear about, that is a high rate compared to every other country in the world that we do business with. That is a negative, but it is also how we tax. We tax in a way that discourages us from bringing profits back to America to the point that, unbelievably, there is between \$2.5 trillion and \$3 trillion—and some say more—of earnings stuck overseas, locked out of America, which could come back here to expand plants, equipment, and jobs, to actually get this economy moving. This is a huge opportunity for us. We don't want to see these companies go offshore. We want to see them come back.

Trade policy is important. Regulations are important. Worker retraining programs are important. Healthcare cost containment is important. But nothing is more important than fixing this broken Tax Code if we are going to see the kind of economic growth and improvement in wages that we all hope for.

There have been a lot of studies done on this, and they say that we haven't changed our code since the mid-1980s, but every other one of our competitors have. They have all lowered their rates, and they have all gone to a system of taxation that is more efficient to get this money back to their countries.

In 1986, Ronald Reagan was President. He made some great changes. That was 31 years ago. Things have changed a lot since then. By the way, back then Pete Rose was still playing for my Cincinnati Reds. That is how long ago it was.

It is time for us to update this Tax Code, to modernize it, and to bring back those jobs and that investment. We can do it. We can do it because of what happened tonight. This creates the framework for us to be able to do this.

In a recent business roundtable survey of 150 American companies—these are the CEOs—82 percent said that tax

reform that we are talking about will prompt them to increase capital spending. Three-quarters of them—76 percent—said that it is going to increase hiring. And with this reduced tax burden, businesses are going to have the money to invest in their workers.

I will tell you, with the tighter job market that is out there now as the economy has begun to improve, this will increase competition for workers, and this will increase wages. We know that is going to happen.

Every economist agrees that this kind of tax reform is going to change behavior. Some might think it doesn't improve the economy as much as others do, but everyone believes this will incentivize us to create more jobs and improve wages here in the United States of America.

There is a group called the Congressional Budget Office, a nonpartisan group up here that we work with. They have a study that says that as much as 70 percent of the benefit from that lower corporate rate is going to go to the workers in terms of higher wages, better benefits. That is the way we are going to help the middle class also—not just with regard to the tax relief directly but with regard to helping to improve job creation and increase wages. So I am excited about this. I think it can happen. I think it is something that is long overdue.

I think it is something, frankly, that should be bipartisan. This was what the Simpson-Bowles proposal, which was a totally bipartisan proposal, said we ought to do. In fact, they took the top rate down to 28 percent—lower than anybody is talking about here. But they said that we should go to this kind of taxation we are talking about in terms of international businesses, in terms of corporations, in terms of creating jobs.

Two years ago, I worked with CHUCK SCHUMER, who is now the Democratic leader here in the U.S. Senate, and we were asked to cochair a working group on taxation—particularly folks on the international side—and we came up with a consensus, which said that we have to fix this broken Tax Code. It is not working, and we need to bring this money back. We need to bring these jobs back by going through this kind of system we are talking about, a so-called territorial system. In the past, this has been bipartisan, and my hope is it can be again.

Yes, the budget provides the framework for us to get this done, not on a 60-vote basis but a 50-vote basis. But we should do it with more than 60 votes. We welcome input from our Democratic colleagues. I believe, in the end, this will be bipartisan because I do believe that the vast majority of Americans out there, as they understand this tax reform proposal will say: Yes, I think middle-class tax relief makes sense, and, yes, I think we should be bringing back the jobs and the investment to this country. I think that is going to be something that Members

will hear across this country and across this aisle. When they do, I believe we will have the opportunity to have the kind of commonsense, bipartisan tax reform we need in this country. We need to do it to be able to have a thriving American middle class, and we need to do it to have a stronger America.

I am excited about this opportunity. I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

Mr. President, I yield back my time on that, but I have another matter that I need to do, the closing business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

REMEMBERING WADE NELSON

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Wade Nelson was a friend who began his professional life as a journalist and served at many levels in public service.

He was regarded as an honest professional in all of his life's work, a father and husband truly dedicated to his family, and a joy to count as a friend.

His colleague and friend, Bob Secter, wrote a remembrance, which I include with this statement. It was given to those of us in attendance at Wade's memorial service at the Unity Temple in Oak Park, IL, on October 7, 2017. The speakers at the service included his wife, Ellen Warren, a respected journalist in her own right, and his sons, Ted and Emmett. They each shared touching stories of Wade as a husband and father. Rick Kogan emceed the celebration with his own signature style and Wade's friends Bern Colleran, Terry Kelleher, Hanke Gratteau, and musician Jon Webber each added great memories to the service.

As Bob Secter wrote:

Back in the rambunctious days of Chicago newspapers, Wade Nelson worked for the legendary columnist Mike Royko who sent his "legman" to check out a tip that Cook County judges were issued cushier toilet paper than that stocked in public restrooms.

The easy part for Nelson was grabbing samples from public toilets in the Loop courthouse, now known as the Daley Center. Obtaining tissue from a judge's inner sanctum was trickier.

So, Nelson made up a pretense to interview Chief Judge John Boyle, then excused himself mid-talk to use the toilet attached to the judge's chambers. He emerged to confront the startled judge with the incriminating evidence, and a great column was born.

Charmin-gate was hardly the highlight of Nelson's days as a reporter. Yet it demonstrated the resourcefulness, spunk, and droll whimsy that propelled him on a rich career path involving being press secretary for the late U.S. Senator Alan Dixon of Illi-

nois, communications director for the federal military base closure commission, political consultant, and chief speech writer for former Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley.

That resume hardly defines the sum of Nelson, however. Friends remember him as someone with boundless curiosity and a walking encyclopedia of knowledge about interests as varied as Midwestern architecture, jazz, the Cubs, anything Chicago related, the minutia of the small Southern Michigan town of Sturgis where his ancestors were early settlers in the 1800s, and the secret to the perfect martini.

Edward Wade Nelson Jr. grew up in west suburban River Forest, attended Fenwick High School in Oak Park and the University of Missouri where he graduated with a degree in journalism.

As a young adult and beyond, his greatest devotion was reserved for performers at Chicago's varied night club, cabaret and piano bar scene where men and women who played and sang there came to embrace Nelson as an honored guest and friend. He became an audience fixture at venues, most now long gone, like The Acorn on Oak, Toulouse, The London House, the Green Mill, and Yvette. Nelson even came to name his family pets after 20th Century jazz legends.

As Nelson climbed the rungs of journalism jobs, from City News to the suburban Wilmette Life and then the Chicago Daily News, his career tracked closely with another young reporter, Ellen Warren, who later became a White House correspondent for the old Knight-Ridder news service and then a columnist for the Chicago Tribune. They eventually married and had two sons.

Nelson moved back to River Forest, but he rejoined Dixon in the mid-1990s when the former senator chaired a politically sensitive federal commission charged with recommending the closure of surplus military bases across the country.

In subsequent years, Nelson served as a spokesman for then-Cook County Circuit Court Clerk Aurelia Pucinski, now an appellate court judge, and the Illinois State Board of Education and became a program officer and grant manager at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, a Michigan-based non-profit specializing in education grants. Wedged in between these jobs was a multiyear stint as the chief speechwriter for Richard Daley, a difficult task making Chicago's notoriously ineloquent mayor sound eloquent.

Wade is survived by his wife and sons, Ted—and his wife, Sarah—and Emmett of Chicago; a sister, Karen Nelson of Chicago; and a brother, Ted—and his wife, Terry—of Spicewood, TX.

TRIBUTE TO ELAINE NEKRITZ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, earlier this month, Elaine Nekritz retired after more than 14 years of service representing the 57th District in the Illinois House of Representatives. Along with being a good friend and dedicated public servant, Elaine was a real leader for her constituents in Northbrook, Arlington Heights, Wheeling, Buffalo Grove, and across her district.

Elaine's legacy in Illinois will always be visible as people travel on high-speed rail from Chicago to St. Louis and throughout the State. As the chair of the Illinois House Railroad Industry Committee, Elaine was a leader in advocating for high-speed rail before it was popular.

During her service in the State House, Elaine championed women's