

folks, hard-working folks to get more in their pocket to decide what they want to do with their money. I raised three children. I know just putting shoes on your children is an expensive proposition. Maybe you want to plan for a trip or save for college. Well, to pay for childcare and to save for college at the same time is almost impossible for our young families today.

The framework we have set forward, I think, will help our families in many ways. First, it calls for a significant increase in the child tax credit. Yesterday, a number of my colleagues from the House and the Senate, joined with Ivanka Trump to highlight what an improved child tax credit would mean for working families. The tax reform proposal would allow families to take a higher per child credit, saving money on their taxes—money they have earned, money the families deserve to spend on their own, and money that could have significant impact to our families.

We will also create a \$500 tax credit for families who are caring for a nonchild dependent. Many Americans find themselves in the sandwich generation, where they are not only caring for their children, they are caring for their parents at the same time. This will help those families.

Second, the proposal nearly doubles the standard deduction or the zero tax bracket. It raises it up to \$24,000 for married taxpayers and up to \$12,000 for single taxpayers.

What kind of impact would this have on a State like mine? Well, 83 percent of the taxpayers in West Virginia take the standard deduction. They are going to get a doubling in their standard deduction. That is more money for them to take home, to put the value of where they want to spend it with their own families. So four out of five West Virginia working families will benefit from that. That is an enormous savings, and even more taxpayers are likely to benefit, as the larger standard deduction means fewer people will itemize. We expect that figure to go up—from 83 percent up. It makes filing taxes simpler, and it makes it so our taxpayers can file on a single form without all of the extra forms, time, and money it takes.

Finally, and most importantly, families will benefit from the economic growth that tax reform will bring to our country. This is probably the biggest impact that tax reform will have for working families. We will lower the corporate rate, yes, for companies, but we have to make our companies competitive across the globe. We are not. We are not competing. What kind of effect does that have? Fewer jobs and lower wages. Companies know that if they invest in their workforce, if they invest in the wages of their workforce, they are going to have a more productive workforce to produce products, to sell products, to enhance the quality of life of their communities.

Many of these large corporations that are scattered around our country

really do a lot of work in the community service parts of our country, whether it is helping with schools or whether it is helping with the baseball teams or sponsoring a robotics team. Why does that matter to working families? More than \$2 trillion in profits earned by American companies is kept offshore because of the flaws in our current tax system—\$2 trillion—and I think some of those estimates might be low. Shifting to a more fair and competitive system will bring those dollars back to the United States. Those companies want to invest in our country because they know we have the safest investments, we have the most technologically advanced and we have the best workforce, and this is great news for American families.

The White House Council of Economic Advisers estimates that lowering that tax rate—that corporate tax rate—from 35 to 20 could increase the pay for the average American by about \$4,000. At my small business roundtable, when I asked, what would you do with tax relief, the first thing she said was “raise the wages of my seven employees.”

So I think that this would be good news for working families, certainly good news for 50 percent of the West Virginia workers who work in small business. We need to make sure we work together, that we target our tax relief to middle-class families.

I say to the Acting President pro tempore, you and I were at lunch the other day with the President. Priority No. 1, the President said that this tax cut must be targeted to the middle class, the working families in this country. That is what this bill has put forward: larger tax credit, larger standard deduction, unlocking the wages by lowering the competitive tax rate. Despite our hard work, too many middle-class families are falling behind, and we want to make sure that trend stops.

So all of us, I think, can join together. This is going to go through committee. Both parties will have lots of opportunity to weigh in, and I look forward to looking into the eyes of the working men and women in my State and saying: Not only is help on the way, but help is here.

Thank you so much.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I think it is going to be a very robust conversation about taxes. When we look into the eyes of working Americans, I hope my Republican colleagues are ready to answer this question, and that is, Why do they, the Republican Party, want to send \$3.5 trillion of tax benefits to the top 1 percent? Why not spend the tax benefits on the middle class?

Well, my colleagues keep coming to the floor and saying this is all about the middle class, but they don't mention that, in fact, every single major change is all about benefits for the richest 1 percent.

Changing the dynasty tax to create a dynasty loophole, wow, that really doesn't benefit anybody in the working class. Lowering the top bracket while raising the bottom bracket, well, that doesn't help anybody in the working class. Providing a special passthrough for those who can put their business activities into limited liability corporations and have a special low rate, well, that certainly doesn't help anybody in the middle class.

One provision after another, after another is targeted at the richest Americans, while coming and preaching help for the middle class. Oh, the American people will see right through this scheme. They are going to ask: Why is it you do so little for those at the bottom? In fact, you do nothing for those in the bottom third. Why is it you do so little for those in the middle class? In fact, many of them will see a tax increase. Why do you send the vast bulk of the benefits to the richest Americans when the richest Americans are already so much richer than anyone else?

The debate we are going to have is important. For my colleagues who think they can fool the American people by talking about the middle class and instead are targeting the richest to be richer, I have news: It is not going to work.

CLIMATE DISRUPTION

Now, Mr. President, I will turn to a different topic. Climate disruption is a seminal challenge of our generation. It affects everything from our forests to fisheries and farming. Rural America is the core target of the impacts of the changing climate, and we see the impacts worldwide. We see it in disappearing ice sheets and melting permafrost and the reduced number of glaciers around the world and dying coral reefs. We see it in migrating animals and insects. We certainly see it in the more powerful hurricanes hitting the United States in Texas and Puerto Rico and Florida.

In response, communities around the world are transforming their energy economies. They are increasing the efficiencies of their buildings, their vehicles, and their appliances. They are working to replace carbon-polluting fossil fuel energy with clean and renewable energy.

Well, how much do you know about the changes underway? Let's find out. Welcome to episode 6 of the “Senate Climate Disruption Quiz.” Here we go.

First question: In December of 2016, vehicle emissions and coal production in the United States of America were each at record lows since what year? Were they at record lows since 1970, 1974, 1980, or 1986? Lock in your answers.

The answer is not 1970 or 1974 or 1980; the answer is 1986. We are now working on over three decades, despite a vast increase in the vehicle miles traveled. We have reduced the emissions, and we certainly reduced the emissions in coal production. We are experiencing quite

a change. We see the transition through clean and renewable energy irrevocably underway.

Let's go to the second question. How many Republican Representatives—Members of the House—asserted that climate change has the potential to adversely impact all Americans? How many Republican Members of the House? Was it 13 or 17 or 20 or 22? Admittedly, it is a modest number.

The number was 17. The answer is B. These 17 Republican lawmakers introduced a resolution warning that “if left unaddressed, the consequences of a changing climate have the potential to adversely impact all Americans.” So this is a very big deal, that 17 Republicans in the party financed by the coal and oil billionaires, who have really taken complete control of the U.S. Senate, stood up to them and said: We are going to speak on behalf of our responsibility, as citizens of the United States of America, to protect our citizens from the assault on our farming and our forestry and our fishing from climate disruption. I praise those 17 for having done so. It is a powerful, bipartisan step in the right direction of championing the cause of all Americans—and for that matter, the entire planet.

Question No. 3: In July of this year, California extended its cap-and-trade program to which year? Did it extend it for just a couple of years to 2020 or to the year 2025, 2030, or 2035? How long did California lay this vision into the future? Lock in your answers.

The answer is 2030. The program would have otherwise expired in 2020, so they extended it another decade. It was basically a statement of confidence that the program that they laid out, that they have in place now, is working and deserves extension. It is the only program of its kind in the country, and it is the second largest in the world.

Under this vision, this new and expanded program, California will cut its emissions of carbon dioxide 40 percent from its 1990 levels, despite having a vastly expanded economy. That is a powerful vision and a vision we need to extend through completely eliminating the burning of fossil fuels in the next three decades.

Question No. 4: How many acres of our citizen-owned—that is, our Federal—fossil fuels were leased to industry as of October 2016? Had we leased out 30 million acres of Federal land for the extraction of fossil fuels or 45 million or 53 million or 67 million? Any of these is really a vast amount of what we own as citizens. Lock in your answers.

The answer is at the top end of the spectrum—67 million acres. What this means is that for years and even decades into the future, we have already contracted for a vast amount of fossil fuels to be extracted from our citizen-owned lands. These extractions add to the problem facing rural America and the impact on our farmers and our fish-

ermen and our forests. That area which has been leased out for the extraction of fossil fuels, which, as citizens, you and I own, is the size of Colorado—a vast sea of fossil fuel extraction leases on public lands. It shows the dire need to pass the Keep It in the Ground Act.

The only responsible thing for us to do is to not do any more leases of our citizen-owned oil or coal or gas. The responsible thing to do, the right thing to do, especially as we work in partnership with the world, is to say no new leases that expand this 67 million acre number.

Now let's turn to Question No. 5. Which U.S. community was the first to make a decision to divest all of its oil and gas stocks because of the impact of oil and gas on destroying our Nation? Was it Cooperstown, NY; Salem, OR; Lawrence, KS; or Walla Walla, WA? Lock in your answers.

The answer is Cooperstown, NY. There is quite an interesting story behind this, a remarkable story. At the center of the story is a man named Louis Allstadt. Mr. Allstadt is a retired ExxonMobil executive. At one point, he managed all of Mobil Oil's exploration in the United States, Canada, and Latin America, so he knew the oil industry, the fossil fuel industry, inside-out from the very top level.

After retiring, he ran for town trustee in Cooperstown. As a town trustee, he then spearheaded an effort for Cooperstown to become the first town in the United States to divest its oil and gas stocks. Mr. Allstadt summed it up this way: “You don't just keep driving your car when you see a cliff ahead.” Well said. Yet so many in this Chamber are determined to drive the car over the cliff.

From the high reaches of the executive suites of Exxon Mobil, Mr. Allstadt could see the damage being done to the planet by the continued burning of fossil fuels. He saw the absolute need to stop, and he took a principled, moral stand on behalf of us all.

Thank you, Mr. Allstadt, for doing that and setting that example. It is one we should all pay attention to. Every city council and every mayor across the country should ask the question: Should we follow Mr. Allstadt's example, the example of Cooperstown, NY? Because if we continue in the direction we are going, we will do fabulous amounts of damage from which we will not easily recover—if we can recover at all.

So there you have it, folks—episode 6 of the “Senate Climate Disruption Quiz.” These questions were ripped from the headlines. Facts on the ground are changing fast as climate disruption increases and communities across the globe respond. We are racing the clock, and we have no time to spare. So stay engaged in the fight.

In the near future, I will bring you episode 7 of the “Senate Climate Disruption Quiz.”

Thank you, Mr. President.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

TAX REFORM

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, over the next few weeks, the Senate, the House, Congress—everybody here in Washington is going to be engaged in what I think is one of the most important and potentially impactful debates we have had here in a long time. For a place that has been so criticized for not doing anything, we have a chance to actually do something that is going to matter and help real people and help the country. It is called tax reform.

I think the great thing about a tax reform debate is that it actually goes to the heart and soul of our identity as a nation and who we want to be and who we have been up to this point.

We are a nation that has embraced free enterprise. There are people who don't believe in free enterprise. There are people who believe in different variations of free enterprise. By and large, America has believed in free enterprise. That basically means the government doesn't try to control too much of the economy. People have private property and private businesses. You have rules to make sure people don't cheat and steal from one another or hurt people, but by and large, we believe in a private economy. Why do we believe that? I think the answer to that is not just a purely economic one; you look back at our founding.

One of the unique things about this country that we have taken for granted and do not do a good enough job of teaching young Americans is that America was not created as a nation to bring together a common race or a common ethnicity or a common religion. There are a lot of nations around the world—in fact, I would argue that most of the nations that have ever existed have been a homeland for the people who were born and have lived in that one place—not us. We were founded on the idea that you could bring different kinds of people from different backgrounds and unite them as one people, despite their differences in background and ethnicity and religion. You could unite them behind a very powerful idea—the idea that all of us are created equal because we were born with a God-given right to life and to liberty and to pursue happiness.

That is not just a revolutionary idea; it has changed the world. It has been the identity of our country. It is among everything else that makes us unique and special. In every generation, it has been challenged economically, socially, and culturally. We need to continue to fight for that.

One of the core principles behind equal opportunity is the ability to fulfill your economic potential—to grow up and be who you want to be, do what you want to do, open a company or work for a certain industry or career or