has distinguished himself as an academic, teaching and publishing in the realm of criminal law and procedure.

In their ringing endorsement of his nomination, a diverse group of more than 100 law professors noted Professor Bibas's ''fair-mindedness, conscientiousness, and personal integrity.'' Those are the sort of qualities we should all want in a circuit court judge.

We are going to confirm Stephanos Bibas and the other nominees I mentioned, no matter how long it takes, this week. The majority leader has put our friends across the aisle on notice, and there is nothing they can do to stop those confirmation votes before we call it a week.

Once again, the administration has demonstrated its skill at picking bright nominees for the right reasons. This week's nominees will read the law faithfully. They will honestly interpret its text, and they will apply it to cases with a sense of humility no matter what their preferred outcome might be.

I appreciate President Trump, Leader MCCONNELL, and the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY, for the hard work in bringing these nominees to the floor. Now let's get them on the Federal bench.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, the other issue I wish to bring up in my remarks today is tax reform, because we all know that the House of Representatives will release the Ways and Means Committee's beginning bill for tax reform—something we have promised for a long time and that the country is anxiously awaiting.

This will be the culmination of months—if not years—of hard work, of meetings, white papers, listening sessions, and the like so that we can deliver on our shared goal of a simpler, fairer tax system that boosts jobs and puts more money in the pockets of every American. Those are our goals.

We know that many hard-working Americans have had a rough time in recent years. Sending their kids to college and securing retirement seems to be harder and increasingly out of reach for some of my constituents back in Texas and people around the country. I hear about their concerns and their anxieties—economic anxieties—every time I go home. It is not acceptable that 50 percent of Americans are finding themselves living from paycheck to paycheck and that a third of voters are one trip to the mechanic shop away from a household financial crisis.

Last week, several of my colleagues and I sat down with the President—we were members of a bipartisan group of the Senate Finance Committee—and discussed our objectives in achieving meaningful and lasting changes to our Tax Code. The President agreed that we should cut taxes for hard-working Americans and that we should nearly double the standard deduction, which reduces the number of people who will have to itemize deductions on their tax return, thus, making compliance with the Tax Code much simpler and cheaper. We agreed that we would significantly increase the child tax credit and reduce taxes on businesses and job creators.

This last objective—reducing taxes on businesses and job creators—deserves a little bit more discussion.

Ireland represents an interesting point of comparison for the United States. We have the highest tax rate in the world—35 percent for businesses that do business all around the globe. Ireland has a corporate rate of 12.5 percent. That is 35 percent to 12.5 percent. Because of that, it has become a haven for large American companies, especially in the high-tech sector.

Ireland has since ended its so-called ''double Irish'' tax scheme, which allowed it to benefit from taxes on income that should have been taxed in the United States. In other words, there is some rivalry and competition when businesses do business worldwide as to where their profits will be taxed. We want to make sure that those profits are taxed in the United States and not in countries abroad, where we would enjoy no benefit from.

This example illustrates what happens when we keep our tax rate so high. Sadly, companies leave. They go elsewhere, because they know that the difference between a 35-percent tax rate and a 12.5-percent tax rate in Ireland may be the difference between making a profit for your shareholders—whether it is the teachers retirement system or the firefighters pension fund—or ending up in the red and not making a profit at all. Savvy companies will leave, and they will go elsewhere. They know to create new entities and search the globe for better rates. It is really a matter of their competitiveness in a global economy.

Of course, when they do this, it is legal. It is rational because they want the best deal they can get for their shareholders. They also want to make sure they can achieve a profit for their shareholders and not a loss, frankly, due to the differential in tax rates.

When companies dodge U.S. taxes, it means we here in the United States miss out on revenue that we would otherwise reap. One thing is for sure. With $20 trillion in debt, we want to make sure that our Tax Code is fair and simple and is competitive and will help us grow our economy in a way that will help us pay down those deficits and that debt.

Now, our Democratic friends have been known to demagogue this issue a little bit, saying: Who wants to cut these corporate tax rates overseas? Corporations shouldn't get a tax cut, even though they know what the facts are.

Well, they should simply listen to people like Barack Obama. In 2011 he was speaking to a joint session of Congress and called on Republicans and Democrats alike to lower the U.S. corporate tax rate because he knew—and he was right—that this was hurting our global competitiveness in a global economy and that companies, out of sheer self-interest, were keeping the profits they had earned overseas rather than bringing them back and suffering from double taxation, meaning that workers here in the United States didn't get the benefit of that infusion of extra cash in their paycheck, and the investment that should occur here in the United States was occurring overseas strictly because of our Tax Code.

My colleague, the senior Senator from Oregon, described corporate inversions. That is what happens when an American company shifts its legal address to a foreign country, such as Ireland, for tax purposes. He called it a ''contagion'' that has affected the Tax Code with ''the chronic diseases of loopholes and inefficiency.'' He went on to call the Tax Code an ''anti-competitive mess.'' He is right.

The senior Senators from Maryland and Ohio have also made similar statements in past years.

We all realize that simplifying our Tax Code will reduce tax compliance costs, which currently run for small business owners at around $19 billion a year. Our Tax Code has simply gotten to be too complex and too convoluted for honest, law-abiding small business owners to do it on their own. So they have to hire somebody else to help them sort it out.

The less money that a small business pays in tax compliance is the more they can spend on their employees or on expanding their business or on investing in new equipment or simply giving their workers a pay raise. Let's give them the relief that they need. Let's reduce the corporate rate, as President Obama and our colleagues on the other side used to argue for. With our proposals, we can also get moving on fixing the rest of the Tax Code to let the hard-working people of Texas and American families keep more of what they earn, improve their standard of living in the process, and to make our Tax Code more competitive in a global economy so that businesses that operate internationally will be incentivized to bring that money back here to the United States to make and manufacture products that are stamped ''Made in America'' and to improve the wages and quality of life and income of American workers. It just strikes me as a no-brainer, and that is exactly what we are going to set out to accomplish to.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TOOMEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, thank you.

FREEDOM TO NEGOTIATE

Labor unions and strong labor laws have helped build the middle class in America and protect the rights of workers for generations.

In the 1970s, union participation was around 30 percent, and it was a golden era for the American middle class. Wages went up. Families had benefits and vacations. Parents could pay for college. They could put food on the table and have money left over. The vast, thriving middle class was built on the blood and sweat of labor unions and those who organized the labor unions, often at their physical peril, back in the thirties.

Unfortunately, over the last few decades, union membership has declined and, along with it, middle-class wages and opportunities. In the seventies, union membership was near 30 percent, but it had fallen to just 11 percent of all workers by 2014. That decline is mostly because the union movement and, concurrently, the middle class, with which it is allied, have been under attack from big corporate special interests and the conservative movement for the better part of the last three decades. It is well funded by a small group of very rich and, I might say, greedy people, and it is patient.

Their goal is to, by any means necessary—Congress, the courts, whatever—break up existing unions and prevent new unions from forming. They will pursue any avenue in order to disrupt the ability of workers to organize and collectively bargain for a fair share of the profits they create so that they can make an extra buck.

These forces will do whatever it takes to keep rigging the system in their favor, like asking the Supreme Court to rule on Janus v. AFSCME, a case backed by the Koch brothers—$40 billion each, maybe more; plenty of money—but they hate giving any money to workers. And there is no record evidence of a single lower court ruling in its favor.

If anyone doubts the politicization of the Supreme Court, just look at their being willing to hear this case twice, which comes with a crazy legal theory that a First Amendment basis should be used to destroy collective bargaining. It is merely designed to eliminate the freedom of people to come together in unions. If the Supreme Court endorses the arguments of Janus, it will be a dark day for the American worker.

Chief Justice Roberts, who said he would be fair and call balls and strikes, in my view, has lost all pretence of fairness. He wants to keep the Court nonpolitical, but he keeps pushing cases like this. Since his confirmation, under Chief Justice Roberts, the Court has methodically moved in a pro-corporate direction in its constantly and consistently siding with the big corporate interests over the interests of workers. Already, it has been the most pro-corporate Court since World War II. A decision in favor of Janus will be a shameful capstone on that already disgraceful record.

I would say to all of those wealthy people who have plenty of money and to all of those corporate executives who get paid in the tens of millions, who are desperate to take money away from middle-class people whose incomes are declining, that you are creating an anger and a sourness in America that is hurting our country in so many different ways.

American workers deserve a better deal, and Democrats are going to offer it. We are calling it freedom to negotiate. We are offering the middle class, and those who are struggling to get there, a better deal by taking on companies that undermine unions and underpay their workers, and beginning to unwind a rigged system that threatens every worker's freedom to negotiate with their employer.

Our plan would, among other things, strengthen penalties on predatory corporations that violate workers' rights; ban State right-to-work laws that undermine worker freedoms to join together and negotiate; strengthen a worker's right to strike for essential workplace improvements; and provide millions of public employees—State, local, and Federal—with the freedom to join a union and collectively bargain with their employers.

Over the past century, labor unions have fought to stitch into the fabric of our economy a basic sense of fairness for workers. Each worker left on his or her own has no power against the big corporate interests that employ them, but together unions and workers who unite in unions can have some say.

No one taught me better about the lack of fairness than a 32BJ worker I met several years ago at the JFK International Airport, who was named Shareeka Elliot. When I first met Shareeka, she was a mother of two children who was struggling to make ends meet. She was working the graveyard shift cleaning the terminals at JFK and serving hamburgers at McDonald's during the day. She was forced to rely on public assistance since she had gotten so little in wages from those jobs. She lived in a house with six other family members to be able to pay the rent. She was not a freeloader. She was working two jobs, but she got minimum wage and could hardly support herself. She barely saw her children and spent most of her free time in getting to this job—this poorly paid, minimum wage job. She had to take a bus for 2 hours from East New York to the JFK International Airport.

She was not angry, by the way, as she was a churchgoing lady. She had faith in God to provide, but she suffered so.

By the way, 30 years ago, if you had cleaned bathrooms at an airport, you would have been employed by the airlines or by the terminal. But because these companies have learned to farm out the labor to subsidiaries, to franchises, and to other corporations that have no accountability, now cleaning those toilets is a minimum wage job.

Over the last 4 years, though, I have seen Shareeka and her coworkers start to rebuild their dreams. She said to me: Senator, if I only could get minimum wage, I might be able to take my kids out to a restaurant—I never could—or buy them toys for Christmas. I never could do that.

Shareeka joined the union, and they fought for a $15 minimum wage. In some parts of the country, that may seem like a lot of money. In New York City, I can tell you that it does not go that far. Costs are higher. Shareeka was able to quit her second job and spend time with her daughters, like all parents want to do. Shareeka and her coworkers won a union contract, and now they are able to gain the tools they needed to protect themselves and do their work in a safer environment.

Shareeka is a metaphor for ''American workers,'' so many of whom have lost good-paying jobs that have gone overseas or that have been closed due to automation. When they organize in these new types of jobs, they can get the kinds of wages people used to get in the jobs that have gone away.

It is pretty simple: When workers have the freedom to negotiate with their employers, they have safer working conditions, better wages, and fairer overtime and leave policies. Shareeka's story is a testament to that fact.

Our better deal, the freedom to negotiate, will do for so many Americans what Shareeka's union did for her in New York. It will turn things around for our country. Maybe middle-class wages will start going up, and maybe people will start having faith in the future again. We Democrats—hopefully, maybe, joined by a few courageous Republicans—are going to fight to get it done.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague Senator BROWN for leading the effort on the floor to speak out against the latest attacks on union rights that are in front of the Supreme Court right now. I am very proud to join him to highlight the contributions unions have made to our middle class, to the economy, and to our country. I want to express my commitment to stand up against any attempts to undermine workers' rights to join a union and bargain collectively.