commute to work, will also notice if they never receive the critical transit benefits they receive now. Thousands of dollars a year that help pay when you transit to work will be gone. Why? To help the wealthy.

While some working Americans and middle-class taxpayers watch their taxes go up, they will read about how Republicans repealed the estate tax, which benefits only 5,500 families whose estates are worth over $5 million. They will learn how, instead of keeping the estate tax or closing the egregious carried-interest loopholes, the Republicans reached into their pockets—the middle-class pockets—to pay for a big corporate tax break that has no guarantee and very little likelihood of producing jobs. They will learn that, while the reduction to the corporate tax rate is permanent, the increase in the child tax credit is temporary.

Big, wealthy corporations count far more than kids in this bill. Corporations get permanent benefits, and families with kids get temporary and meager ones.

The Tax Code is a reflection of fairness in our society. Do we want to be in a country where everyone pays their fair share, including big corporations and the very wealthy? I think so. I think most Americans agree with that. Yet right now, our Tax Code is slanted in favor of the rich and the powerful, and the Republican plan makes it only worse.

The Republican tax plan would put two thumbs down on a scale already tipped toward the wealthy and powerful. It wouldn't create jobs. It wouldn't raise wages. The Tax Policy Center, as we know, estimated that 80 percent of the benefits of the Republican plan go to the top 1 percent—this new bill doesn't change that a bit—while nearly one-third of middle-class Americans would see a tax increase; 80 percent of the benefits to the top of our country, 20 percent of the benefits to the other 99 percent. That is not a middle-class tax bill, as President Trump said it would be.

Surely, we can do better. If our colleagues—whether it be in the House or Senate, our Republican colleagues who are trying to go it alone—can't pass this bill, we would welcome them. We would welcome an opportunity to sit down together and come up with a bill that really helps the middle class.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TAX REFORM

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, today is an important day on our promise to deliver tax relief for America's working families and our businesses, to create more jobs and grow our economy faster. The House Ways and Means Committee is about to unveil their first draft of a tax cut bill. That is a good step forward after we both passed our budgets a couple of weeks ago.

As we move forward through this process, it is important that we all recognize that tax cuts are a way to let the American people and our businesses keep more of their money, not the government's money but their money. We also have to be mindful of the impact it has on our staggering national debt of over $20 trillion and rising deficits. We can expect the economy to grow at a much healthier rate than it has in recent years if we pass a good tax bill. But we also need to look for other ways to offset the costs of those tax cuts to a degree.

There have been a lot of discussions during the year about what I would consider unwise and painful changes to our tax law. Eliminating deductions, credits, exclusions, exemptions—they are popular and widespread. Some people call that the spinach, in addition to the ice cream of tax cuts.

However, I have what I would call maybe a creative idea, a novel idea—one that I think is gaining momentum in the Senate and in the House. We can repeal the individual mandate of ObamaCare and save $300 to $400 billion for the Federal Government and therefore deliver more tax relief to our families and our workers and our businesses. That is not my math. That is the math of the Congressional Budget Office. They have said repeatedly that eliminating the individual mandate of ObamaCare would save $300 to $400 billion. That is a lot of tax cuts.

The individual mandate has also been the most unpopular part of ObamaCare. More than two-thirds of Americans want to see it repealed. The House has voted repeatedly to repeal it. The Senate has voted to repeal it. Even some Democrats have said that they want to repeal the individual mandate as well. It is the first time in our country's history, after all, that the Federal Government has said: You must buy the product of a private company for the mere privilege of being an American citizen.

We also know that the individual mandate simply has not worked. It was designed to hold down premiums on the ObamaCare exchanges. That has not been the case. Despite the individual mandate being in place now for 4 years, we continue to see premiums spiral out of control. So I think it is a pretty reasonable proposal to repeal the most hated part of ObamaCare to help pay for tax cuts the American people want rather than trying to eliminate popular and widely used deductions, credits, exemptions, and exclusions.

Moreover, it allows us to make more of the tax cut bill permanent because the $300 to $400 billion savings over a 10-year period is just a 10-year period, but it will continue to save money after those 10 years. With the crazy way we do our budgeting around here, that allows us to make more of those tax cuts permanent so that our families and our businesses can have greater predictability to save and invest and grow our economy.

It is also a kind of tax cut for working-class Americans in its own right. According to IRS data, more than five out of six households that paid the mandate fine last year made less than the median income. They were in the bottom half of income earners.

So what are we doing? We are imposing a fine on the working class and working poor because they can't afford the insurance that ObamaCare made unaffordable in the first place. That is crazy.

We can do this in a way that makes it easier to pass a tax bill. I know some of my colleagues around here, especially some of my Republican colleagues, say: Oh, no. We can't go back to healthcare. It is going to make the tax bill a little harder to pass. That is nonsense. It makes the tax bill easier to pass—easier to pass because it helps make the fiscal picture balance, and it helps deliver more tax cuts to our families and our businesses back home.

Some of my Democratic colleagues, drawing on that same estimate from the Congressional Budget Office, will say: You are going to take healthcare away from 15 million people. That is nonsense. This bill doesn't cut a single dime out of ObamaCare, not even one penny, not one penny taken out of Medicaid, not one penny taken out of the subsidies from the exchanges, not a single regulation change. It simply says that the IRS will not fine you if you cannot afford the insurance that ObamaCare made unaffordable.

The $300 to $400 billion—even in Washington, that is a lot of money, and that is money that is better left in the pockets of America's workers and families and on the financial statements of businesses that are looking to expand their operations, increase their wages, and hire more workers.

No, this hasn't been part of the tax debate for a long time. This Chamber considered repealing the mandate as part of our healthcare debate, but the Obama administration called the individual mandate a tax.

In 2012, the Supreme Court upheld its constitutionality saying that it was a tax. The IRS collects it. You pay it on your 1040. That is about the ''taxiest'' provision I can think of.

Let's make a commonsense decision, even if it is a little late in the game. Repeal the individual mandate. Pay for more tax cuts for families and businesses. Make a tax bill easier to pass. Deliver on the promise that we made to the American people to repeal the most unpopular part of ObamaCare and have a very big victory for the American people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, we currently have the highest Federal corporate tax rate in the developed world. Businesses are moving from here overseas to seek a friendlier tax environment.

If we are going to compete globally—and we are in a global economy—we have to have a conducive tax and regulatory environment to do so. We don't have a conducive tax environment now. We cannot compete globally with the second highest or the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world.

We also have a tax code that is far too complicated. Taxpayers and companies alike spend about 9 billion hours a year—9 billion hours a year—combined with IRS requirements, and this costs the U.S. economy more than $400 billion a year. This is just compliance costs.

The Tax Code is also full of costly loopholes which allow businesses and millions of individuals to get away with paying no income tax or no corporate tax.

After over 30 years, I am pleased to see Congress finally getting down to the work of doing a tax overhaul. A few weeks ago, we passed a budget that allows some cuts—about $1.5 trillion. I believe that when we do cut certain taxes, it does generate a greater economic activity, which does in turn mean additional revenue to government. However, there are limits to that model. We cannot simply assume we can cut all taxes and realize additional revenue. It is important that tax reform comes as well.

We have been hearing a lot about cuts, cuts, cuts. If we are going to do cuts, cuts, cuts, we have to do a wholesale reform. With the national debt exceeding $20 trillion, we have to take this seriously. Rate reductions have to be accompanied by repeal or reform. We cannot simply rely on rosy economic assumptions, rosy growth rates to fill in the gap. We have to make tough decisions. We cannot have cuts today that assume we will grow a backbone in the out-years in terms of the real reforms we are going to need. We have seen this before. We make the cuts now; we rely on rosy economic assumptions; and then, in the out-years, if those don't come about, we forget what we were supposed to do in terms of reform. We can't do that today, not with a debt of $20 trillion, not with a deficit of over $600 billion a year adding to that total debt.

I welcome this opportunity to do tax reform. It is needed. As I mentioned, we have to have a conducive tax and regulatory environment in order to compete, but we have to be realistic as well about what we can achieve, and we can't push off the reforms for cuts today.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

SAVE ACT

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. President, today I rise with my colleague from New Mexico, Senator HEINRICH, to discuss the Securing America's Voting Equipment Act of 2017, or the SAVE Act, which we introduced earlier this week.

I know that you are well aware that the Senate Intelligence Committee has been conducting an in-depth investigation into attempts by the Russians to interfere with our elections last fall. What we have found is that the Russians' active measures preceded last fall, and they continue to this very day.

We have an election coming up in November of this year and a major election next year, and both Senator HEINRICH and I believe that it is so important that we act to assist States in protecting the integrity of their voting systems.

Our bill seeks to facilitate information sharing on the threats posed to State election systems by foreign adversaries, to provide guidance to States on how to protect their systems against nefarious activity, and, for States that choose to do so, to allow them to access some Federal grant money to implement best practices to protect their systems.

Let me be clear that I know of no evidence to date that actual vote tabulations were manipulated in any State in the elections last fall. Nevertheless, as early as the summer of 2016, the FBI discovered that foreign-based hackers had gained access to voter registration databases in two States. The Department of Homeland Security confirmed that Russia-linked actors attempted to access voter rolls and registration data in those two States.

More alarming is that further investigation revealed that many more States than just two were ultimately found to have had their voting systems probed by the Russians. The Department of Homeland Security notified election officials in a total of 21 States that their election systems had been targeted by Russian Government-linked hackers.

If voter rolls were altered or voting equipment tampered with, a compromise of these systems could open the door to voter disenfranchisement and would undermine public confidence and the integrity of our free and fair elections—a bedrock principle of our democracy.

In response to these alarming threats, the SAVE Act would assist States in hardening their systems. It does not aim to tell States how to conduct their elections. The responsibility for conducting elections would remain with each State, as has been our country's tradition since its founding. State and local election officials alone, however, cannot be expected to defend against cyber attacks from foreign adversaries. That is why our bill seeks to bring to bear the unique authorities, capabilities, and resources that the Federal Government can offer to State and local election officials.

Let me briefly describe the Heinrich-Collins bill.

First, our bill would codify a decision made by both Secretaries of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson and John Kelly, to designate election systems as "critical infrastructure." This designation allows DHS to prioritize providing assistance to election jurisdictions and to establish formal mechanisms to enhance information sharing and collaboration within the electoral sector. More than 30 States took advantage of DHS's offer of assistance last year.

Our bill also addresses a shortcoming that I raised during a hearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee in June regarding foreign efforts to compromise American voting systems. During this hearing, we learned that not a single secretary of state had been cleared to receive classified information before the 2016 election or in the 6 months since voting systems had been declared as critical infrastructure. This delay is truly inexplicable. We have to be able to share this critical information in order for State election officials to take the necessary steps to safeguard their systems.

Our bill addresses this limitation on information sharing by authorizing the Director of National Intelligence to provide security clearances to designated chief election officials in each State. That way, the intelligence community can share appropriate classified information with States regarding foreign threats targeting election systems.

Our bill also mandates that DHS conduct a threat assessment on physical and electronic risks to voting systems. Then, in collaboration with stakeholders, the Department will develop best practices to address those risks.

A few simple measures can make a big difference. Best practices like relying upon paper ballots, as the State of Maine currently does, and conducting postelection audits to ensure that the tabulation by vote-counting machines matches the results of the paper ballots can bolster both resilience and public confidence in the integrity of the voting process.

Finally, our bill creates a Federal grant program available for States to upgrade and safeguard the integrity of their systems by implementing the best practices that have been identified.

Last year, the Russian Government sought to disrupt our democracy by threatening the integrity of our elections. It is incumbent upon Congress to