

has worked to undermine the core mission of the office he would oversee. He is a nominee who has demonstrated a willingness to side with protecting Big Business instead of protecting our Nation's most valuable resources and whose independence is truly in question.

Unfortunately, when looking at President Trump's record as a businessman, these decisions do not come as a surprise. President Trump spent decades as a real estate developer, cheating workers and contractors out of their hard-earned pay, and he refused to allow his own hotel workers to join together and advocate for safer working conditions and better wages.

President Trump's vision of our economy is one in which workers bear the burden, and the people who live in gilded towers get the benefit. The contrast with Democrats could not be clearer. Last week, Democrats rolled out an ambitious agenda to reform our labor laws to, once again, empower workers to join together, make their voices heard, and fight for better wages and benefits.

Currently, it is extremely difficult for workers to seek justice when corporations violate their rights, and if we want to rebuild the middle class, we have to change that because workers having the right to organize and join unions helped to build the middle class we have today. For many workers in the 20th century, good union jobs helped them to support their families and climb the economic ladder, but over the past few decades, our economy has worked in favor of corporations and those at the top. As corporate management and special interests have undermined workers in their right to collectively bargain, we have seen, of course, a decline in unions and union membership across the country. This has allowed President Trump and billionaires like him to take advantage of their workers, and it has given workers little recourse in standing up and fighting for better working conditions.

The preamble of the National Labor Relations Act clearly states that it is the policy of the United States to encourage collective bargaining to give workers a voice, allowing them to speak up for fair wages and safe working conditions, and it is the responsibility of the NLRB to ensure that workers' rights are protected so they are not taken advantage of. The NLRB gives workers the opportunity to file charges against corporations when they are illegally fired or retaliated against for exercising their rights, and because President Trump's own businesses have had complaints filed against them numerous times, it is so critical now that the Board is independent and committed to that core mission.

Unfortunately, I have serious concerns about Mr. Robb's commitment to that core mission and to supporting workers' rights so more families, not fewer, have financial security. Mr.

Robb has spent most of his career as a corporate lawyer, representing Big Business and seeking to limit the rights that workers are guaranteed under the National Labor Relations Act—the very law he is now asking to be in charge of and enforce. He has defended companies against unfair labor allegations, age and discrimination charges, and unfair wage and hour claims. If he is confirmed, Mr. Robb will have the sole decision-making power as to which cases will be brought before the NLRB.

Given his long history of defending corporations, I don't believe workers can trust him to act with their best interests at heart or to stand up to President Trump and his vision of an economy that works for those at the top but that undercuts workers' wages, safety, and rights.

I will be voting no on Mr. Robb's nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do the same. I know every single one of my colleagues has spoken to working families in his State who feel left behind today—families who work full time and who are saving what they can. They are struggling to make ends meet. It is time that we stop prioritizing corporate profits and start focusing on those workers and our middle class. We can only strengthen our economy if we give workers a voice in it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TEXAS CHURCH MASS SHOOTING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as the world now knows, there was a tragic shooting in Sutherland Springs, TX, last Sunday, which took the lives of 26 innocent people and injured 20 more. On Monday evening there was a prayer vigil for those victims. The community gathered to pray and to pay their respects to the deceased.

There are two people in particular who were in attendance, whom I want to highlight: Stephen Willeford and Johnnie Langendorff. I mentioned them yesterday, and perhaps you have seen them on the news, but I have been thinking a lot about them lately. In addition to the tragedy, this was really one of the things that gives you a little hope amidst the terrible circumstances. Stephen, of course, is the man who responded to the shooter's rampage by grabbing his rifle and running toward the First Baptist Church. Johnnie drove the truck that chased the gunman down at high speed. In typical Texas fashion, these two gentlemen don't consider themselves to be heroes, but I consider them to be heroes. They said that they were just doing what needed to be done. Johnnie

said it was an "act now, ask questions later" kind of deal.

I think we in Washington should take more of our cues from people like Johnnie and Stephen. We should show courage, track down anything that is not right, and do our very best to fix it. In particular, Stephen Willeford—maybe you have to be a Texan or an Alaskan to really appreciate what he did. From what I have read, he was an NRA-certified shooting instructor. He apparently heard the shooting at the church, grabbed his gun and went there and, basically, ended up stopping the shooter from killing more people.

The shooter apparently had accumulated enough ammunition to do a lot more damage than he did, but, thanks to the intervention of this concerned citizen, this person who was willing to put himself in harm's way actually shot the shooter and discouraged him from doing more. But for his actions, a lot more people would have died on that terrible, terrible Sunday.

The police can't be everywhere all of the time. That is one reason why, in my State and around the country, we believe that citizens ought to be able to defend themselves under appropriate circumstances.

We now know that the gunman was court-martialed by the Air Force and convicted of serious domestic abuse. Under current Federal law, this should have prohibited him from ever purchasing a firearm. The fact that it didn't means that we need to figure out why Federal law wasn't followed and make darn sure that the relevant information is always uploaded into the background check databases.

There were multiple errors—human and systematic errors—that should have prevented this shooter from ever buying a firearm. He unlawfully purchased four firearms that he wasn't permitted to purchase. Federal background checks did not turn up his Air Force conviction for domestic violence, a felony, for fracturing the skull of his infant stepson. These convictions were not uploaded on the NICS Federal database.

I plan to introduce legislation—and I have been talking to a number of colleagues on both sides of the aisle who are interested in providing a solution to this problem, but we are going to introduce legislation to ensure that all Federal departments and agencies, including the Department of Defense, upload the required conviction records. My legislation will also encourage to the greatest extent possible under the Constitution that State and local governments do the same.

We all remember the terrible shooting that occurred at Virginia Tech a few years ago by a person who had already been adjudicated to be mentally ill by the State, but because the State did not upload that information into the Federal database when he went to buy a firearm, there was no hit, no disqualifier that appeared that would have prevented him from buying that

firearm in the first place. We need to make sure those systems work every time.

What Sutherland Springs has exposed is that the Federal Government is failing to comply with reporting requirements. This is unacceptable, and it must change.

Yesterday, Gen. David Goldfein, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, came by my office, and I am grateful to him for that. I told him that it must have been one of his worst days when he found out that the Air Force had failed to notify the Federal authorities of the information that would have disqualified this individual from buying a firearm. He appropriately expressed grave concern over the fact that the gunman's convictions were not sent to the NICS database. He pledged to get to the root of the problem, and I believe him.

It is worth noting that we have tried to address similar problems before, and we can do it again. In 2015, I introduced a bill called the Mental Health and Safe Communities Act, which addressed a related issue, and that was the failure of State and local authorities to upload valuable mental health records into this same NICS database.

I think there is a bipartisan willingness in this Chamber to work on problems inherent in the sharing of these records, and I hope my colleagues will join with me in supporting this new legislation once it is introduced. We are shooting for the first part of next week. We owe it to the men and women and the families of Sutherland Springs to make sure that our laws are enforced and that individuals like this shooter with a history of violence do not gain illegal access to firearms.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, I want to address the work that the House Ways and Means Committee is currently engaged in and what we will be doing in the U.S. Senate to reform our overly complex, burdensome, and self-destructive tax system. I think there is a lot of momentum gathering each day.

Yesterday, Senator MCCONNELL, the majority leader, commented on our once-in-a-generation opportunity to overhaul our Tax Code. To accomplish this goal, both the House and the Senate are moving forward on different proposals.

This week, the House Ways and Means Committee completed its first 2 days of discussing the House bill unveiled last week called the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. At the same time, the Senate Finance Committee is continuing its work too. Chairman HATCH will continue to guide the committee through an open process, and members will have the chance to engage in productive discussions and debate. That will start once the chairman's mark or the base bill is released, hopefully by later this week. Perhaps as early as next week, we will begin the process in the Senate Finance Committee of marking up that bill, with Senators offering amendments and voting on it.

Once both Houses of Congress have completed their work, my hope is that we can get this bill on the President's desk by Christmas.

Some of our colleagues across the aisle, instead of contributing to the solution to this overly complex and self-destructive Tax Code, have been lobbing insults from their partisan bunkers, even though many of them have endorsed many aspects of the plans in years past. For example, early on, interestingly, there was criticism of our desire to make our global tax system more competitive so that more businesses will move their manufacturing facilities back to the United States and so that we can stamp more of their products "Made in America," creating more jobs here. It is ironic because they were criticizing us for giving tax relief to businesses when people like President Barack Obama, back in 2011, had endorsed the very same concept, not to mention the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator WYDEN, and Senator SCHUMER. All of them have endorsed similar proposals, yet they were quick to criticize us for doing exactly the same things that they themselves had previously endorsed. Unfortunately, our Democratic friends are quick to criticize our plans not just because they disagree with them on the merits but simply because it is our proposal and they are not interested in working with us across party lines.

This is really a shame and a lost opportunity. People are crying out for Democrats and Republicans to work together in the best interests of the country. Unfortunately, our Democratic friends are simply ignoring the urgency of the situation—the stagnation of American workers' wages and couples finding it harder to start families or, once they do, pay for a college education. As my friend the junior Senator from Florida, Senator RUBIO, wrote a few days ago in the *New York Times*, it is more than time to reconcile "our social contract to the realities that working families face."

The Tax Code has not been comprehensively overhauled since 1986. Now that some of us are trying to, the swamp is fighting back. It is important that we win this fight against the swamp—the special interest groups that try to come in and protect various special-interest tax provisions that make our code unnecessarily complicated, forcing us to look for additional revenue from other sources because they want to protect theirs at the expense of the rest of the country.

But the do-nothing approach of the recent past will not work. We can't let them stop us because hard-working families are waiting. They are waiting on us to quit stuffing our own pockets and start putting money back into theirs.

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.

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

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 3:45 p.m. today there be 30 minutes of postcloture time remaining on the Robb nomination, equally divided between the leaders or their designees; that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on the confirmation of the Robb nomination; and that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; finally, that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to the cloture vote on the Wehrum nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, Donald Trump has consistently made promises to the American people that he refuses to keep. He says one thing and does the exact opposite. His empty promises have already hurt millions of people across the country, from our seniors who depend on Medicare and Medicaid, to the LGBTQ community he promised to protect and Dreamers living in fear of deportation.

Now, with the nomination of Peter Robb to serve as the General Counsel at the National Labor Relations Board, or NLRB, Donald Trump has broken yet another promise—this time, to fight for and protect American workers. As an independent agency, the NLRB has an important mission to enforce our Nation's labor laws, protect American workers, and safeguard their right to organize collectively.

The NLRB's mission is not to ignore our Nation's labor laws, to go after American workers, or to weaken their right to organize. Yet Peter Robb's career has been dedicated to doing all the things that NLRB is not about.

Joining the anti-union, anti-worker forces, President Trump has consistently nominated people to the NLRB who are best positioned to destroy and undermine the core functions of the agency itself. Earlier this year, President Trump forced through two management-side lawyers to create an anti-worker majority on the NLRB.

Today the Senate is debating the nomination of someone who has spent his entire legal career fighting to screw over the very workers the NLRB is supposed to protect. If confirmed as General Counsel, Mr. Robb will be responsible for supervising nearly 1,500 agents investigating and prosecuting unfair labor practice cases and overseeing elections where workers decide whether or not to unionize. This is a position