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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable DEAN HELLER, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, thank You for the gift of our veterans, those on Capitol Hill and beyond. May our veterans make us mindful of the price of our freedom.

Lord, infuse us with a spirit of gratitude for those who have offered their lives on the field of battle that we might live in peace. Let not one of our veterans feel forgotten, neglected, or unappreciated. May they know by experience the deep and enduring gratitude of a grateful nation.

Lord, You know the burdens that many of our veterans must bear. Some feel isolated and alone; others feel misunderstood. Bring physical, emotional, and spiritual healing to their lives, providing them with the wisdom to trust You with their future.

Lord, we ask Your particular blessings upon the Senators who in military service have sacrificially given their time, comfort, strength, ambition, and health. Reward them one hundredfold for their sacrifice and service, blessing them more than they can ask or imagine.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication

to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, November 9, 2017.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable DEAN HELLER, a Senator from the State of Nevada, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. HELLER thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Wehrum nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of William L. Wehrum, of Delaware, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this has been another important week here

in the Senate. We are moving forward on multiple aspects of the President's agenda.

Later today, the Senate Finance Committee will release its plan for tax reform. I will have more to say on this in a moment, but I would once again like to commend Chairman HATCH for his leadership to get us to this point.

The Senate is also focusing on confirming the President's nominees so they can finally get to work. We have built strong momentum from last week, when we confirmed four circuit court nominees. This week we have confirmed nominees for the Department of Defense, the Department of Justice, and the National Labor Relations Board.

Soon we will also confirm the head of a critical office at the EPA. William Wehrum will put his experience to good use as Assistant Administrator for the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation. This office is one of the EPA's most important but, unfortunately, under the Obama administration, was also among the offices with the most significant overreach. Obviously it was in desperate need of new leadership from someone who understands how to implement clean air policies in a balanced way. That is William Wehrum. I look forward to advancing his nomination shortly.

Confirming President Trump's talented nominees to the Federal Government will continue to be a priority of this Senate, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to get this done.

TAX REFORM

Now on another matter, Mr. President, today Chairman HATCH will lay out his legislative proposal for tax reform. It is the product of a lot of hard work, dozens of hearings, and member input, and I look forward to its release later today.

The release of this plan is another critical step toward providing relief to the middle class. Once it is unveiled,

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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the proposal will go through regular order in the committee. Senators on both sides will have the opportunity to offer amendments and work together to help hard-working families all across our country.

This is our once-in-a-generation opportunity to lower taxes and shift the economy into high gear. In fact, tax reform represents the single most important thing we can do to spur growth and to help American families. With this tax reform plan, the American people will know that relief is on the way. For you and your family, we want to make taxes lower, simpler, and fairer. For small businesses, we want to make it easier to navigate the Tax Code, grow, and hire workers. And for all businesses, we want to make it an easy decision for them to bring investment and jobs home and to keep them here.

As the Finance Committee continues to work on tax reform, both Republicans and Democrats will have the chance to offer their own ideas to make the bill better. I certainly hope they take it. The process isn't behind closed doors; it is out in the open for everyone to see and for everyone to take part.

The House Ways and Means Committee is expected to finish their work on their legislative proposal soon. Under Chairman BRADY's leadership, they have put a lot of good work into this.

I look forward to continuing to work with colleagues in both the House and the Senate, along with President Trump and his team, on our mutual tax reform goals. Our main goal is this—this is what it is all about—we want to take more money out of Washington's pockets and put more money in the pockets of the middle class.

In addition to the great work being done by Chairman HATCH in the Finance Committee, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, under the leadership of Chairman MURKOWSKI, is taking important steps as well. The recent budget resolution gave the committee instructions to generate \$1 billion of new revenue for the Federal Government. The committee has now unveiled legislation to do just that by further developing the oil and gas potential in Alaska in an environmentally responsible way. Their good efforts can produce important benefits to both the people of Alaska and to our entire country. I commend Chairman MURKOWSKI for her efforts to support our Nation's energy security. This plan is a limited, responsible effort that can result in new jobs, a strong source of energy, and a boost to our economy, all while being responsible stewards of Alaska's environment. I look forward to the committee reporting this legislation next week as well.

The Senate has many important items before it. Let's work together to get them done, fulfilling our commitments to the American people.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

REPUBLICAN TAX PLAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, later today the Senate Republicans will release their version of the tax bill. The bill will not include a single idea of Democrats in the Senate. Not a single Democrat has had any input into this bill. It was constructed entirely behind closed doors by the majority party, who have no intention of negotiating with Democrats because they locked themselves into a partisan process that only requires a majority vote.

They are trying to rush it through this Chamber with reckless speed. Why? Because my friends on the other side know that the longer their bill is out there for the public to see, the less the public likes it. Their only hopes of passing it are to rush it through before anyone can grapple with the stunning hypocrisy at the center of their plan.

The Republican majority has repeatedly promised a middle-class tax bill, but instead, they have concocted a bill grounded in tax cuts for big corporations and the very rich. They actually hurt middle-class people because they need to give those big breaks for the wealthiest.

While promising that their plan gives "everyone a tax cut"—that is what Speaker RYAN said again today—multiple independent analyses conclude that the House Republican tax plan would increase taxes on millions of middle-class families, contrary to what Republicans promised and what Donald Trump has promised. They said: No middle-class people will get an increase. This is aimed at helping the middle class.

But the vast majority of the help goes to the wealthiest and biggest corporations. A New York Times analysis found that next year the House Republican plan would cause taxes to go up on one-third of all middle-class families. By 2026 taxes will go up on nearly half of all middle-class families.

So even if you come from a State with a lower tax rate—a red State—it is probably a good bet that a quarter of the middle-class families will get a tax increase. I think the lowest I saw was 17 percent for West Virginia.

So this hurts middle-class people, and it hurts certain middle-class people much more than others—people who have student loans, people who have high medical expenses, people who come from States where there are large property taxes, people who have big mortgages. These are middle-class people. They should not get a tax increase.

Mark Mazer, director of the independent Tax Policy Center, said:

You could create a plan that just cuts taxes for middle-class people. That's not what this is.

That is him, not me. It is what Republicans promised people.

Now, we will see what the Senate comes up with today. But several Republican Senators have already confirmed that the Senate bill has the same structure as the House bill, and, in at least one way, we know it is worse for middle-class families than the House bill because the House bill will reduce the value of State and local deductions by 70 percent, while the Senate bill eliminates it entirely. My friend from Ohio, Senator PORTMAN, confirmed that a few days ago on FOX Business.

This should be a three-alarm fire for every House Republican in California, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Washington, Illinois, Colorado, and Minnesota. Senate Republicans are telling House Republicans there will be no compromise on State and local deductibility. It is full repeal or bust because Senate Republicans need the revenue raised by ending this popular middle-class deduction.

There are several deficit hawks in the Senate. We have stricter budget rules for reconciliation. If the Senate tax plan includes cuts to the corporate rate, the pass-through rate, and on upper tax brackets—which dramatically increase the deficit—they will need the revenue from the full repeal of State and local to make the numbers work.

So I say to every one of my Republican colleagues in the House who comes from a suburban district: This bill could be your political doom. Don't let the special interests, don't let the party leadership push you into doing something that is bad for so many of your constituents. You will pay a price.

House Republicans should kill the bill now if they want to have any hope of stopping the full repeal of the State and local deduction. They can't hide behind the so-called compromise in the House bill. It is nothing more than a temporary fig leaf for full and permanent repeal.

As I said, if House Republicans don't kill it now, it will come back to haunt them. The overwhelming Democratic turnout in suburban districts in Virginia, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania should send shivers down the spine of House Republicans who represent those districts. Voting to repeal the State and local deduction—walloping the middle-class and upper middle-class suburbs—would be political suicide, all this to bow down to the special big interests of large corporations.

Even with the compromise, the House numbers are devastating. Representative MACARTHUR said he was shown information that shows the compromise is good for his district, and he went from a no to a "leans" yes, according to POLITICO.

Representative MACARTHUR, go look at the real numbers.