

The Senate's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act represents the consensus views of the Finance Committee members and it reflects the values shared by the House, the Senate, and the Trump administration, put forward in our unified framework earlier this year. Chairman HATCH has shown impressive leadership to craft this proposal, and I look forward to his continued guidance of the committee under regular order.

Today, members will have the opportunity to give opening statements and provide their insights on the proposal. During this process, the committee will consider amendments from both sides. As of this morning, more than 300 amendments have been filed by both Republican and Democrat members. Additionally, all Senators will have the chance to share their opinions here on the Senate floor. This is an open process.

It is time to reform our Tax Code and provide much needed relief to the hard-working men and women of this country. The Finance Committee's proposal would do just that.

In a related action this week, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, under the leadership of Chairman MURKOWSKI, will begin to mark up legislation supporting our Nation's energy security. Further developing Alaska's oil and gas potential in an environmentally responsible way is an important effort to help create new jobs, generate new wealth, and provide for our energy future and energy security.

These committee markups are positive steps toward growing our economy and helping the middle class.

#### NOMINATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, the Senate will continue its progress in confirming the President's nominees. Last week we confirmed multiple nominees to a number of Federal agencies. Soon they will get on the job for our country.

This week we will start by considering two nominees for the Department of Transportation. Later today, the Senate will vote to confirm Derek Kan to serve as the Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy. Mr. Kan has experience in a wide range of transportation matters, from Amtrak to ride-sharing platforms. His career in both the private and public sectors will serve him well as he works to develop important policies related to our Nation's infrastructure. I will be supporting Mr. Kan's nomination, and I would urge all Senators to join me.

Next, we will consider the nomination of Steven Bradbury to be general counsel of the Department of Transportation. During Mr. Bradbury's service at the Justice Department in the Bush administration, he advised the executive branch on various legal and constitutional questions. I am grateful that he has chosen to serve our Nation once again.

Next up will be David Zatezalo to serve as the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health and, then, Joseph Otting to be the Comptroller of the Currency. Finally, we have two more talented and qualified nominees to serve as Federal district court judges, Donald Coggins and Dabney Friedrich.

Thoughtful consideration of President Trump's nominees is an important responsibility of the Senate, and we will continue to move swiftly so they can get to work for the American people. I look forward to considering each of them this week, and I would urge all of our colleagues to join me.

#### 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 and resume consideration of the Kan nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Derek Kan, of California, to be Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam 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.

#### PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO ASIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I am going to spend the bulk of my time this afternoon focusing on the tax plan, but first I must address President Trump's trip to Asia.

Without exaggeration, the President's trip to Asia has been one of the most embarrassing foreign trips a President has taken in my memory. It shows when it comes to foreign policy, President Trump is not ready for prime time.

After a campaign in which he routinely criticized China—rightly, in my opinion—for rapacious trading practices that have stolen American jobs and depressed American wages, Presi-

dent Trump went to China and gave them a get-out-of-jail-free card. Instead of speaking sternly and truthfully to the Chinese leaders about the realities of our unbalanced and unfair trade system—where we play by the rules, and they do not; we lose jobs, they gain them—President Trump tried to appease the Chinese and their leader.

Instead of demanding concessions on trade, instead of demanding the same equal access to markets we provide Chinese firms, instead of addressing the sordid history of intellectual property theft and extortion, President Trump was eager to let China off the hook, saying it was “not their fault” but rather the failure of American Presidents. Imagine blaming America for the Chinese trade imbalance and letting China get off scot-free. Is that putting America first?

President Xi flattered President Trump, and he fell for it hook, line, and sinker. From each of his interactions with President Xi, President Trump has only gotten flattery, pomp, and circumstance but nothing for the American worker—nothing.

If he keeps this approach up with a growing economic power like China, President Trump will be the author of a new international reality: America second.

Concerning the situation on the Korean Peninsula, instead of working toward a new meaningful understanding of how to best deal with North Korea, President Trump traded petty barbs with the President of North Korea on Twitter. Close your eyes for a moment and imagine if this was the way Roosevelt behaved toward Stalin or Eisenhower toward Khrushchev or Kennedy toward Castro. This is below the dignity of the Office of President of the United States, and it erodes America's power in the world.

Worst of all, again, President Trump seemed to instinctively accept the word of President Putin against 17 U.S. intelligence agencies about whether Russia interfered in our election. We know that Russia interfered with our elections. Our entire intelligence community—17 agencies—has concluded it. Why does President Trump continue to give President Putin the benefit of the doubt while discrediting and demeaning American intelligence officers? It is shameful, unpatriotic—deeply unpatriotic—and he only halfheartedly walked back his comment after the fact. Every American should wonder why President Trump goes to such great lengths to avoid criticizing President Putin.

After 8 years of Republicans questioning President Obama's toughness with foreign leaders—an attack that I give no credence to by repeating—it seems that President Trump, not President Obama, is the one who is afraid to take on America's adversaries. He forgoes China and cozies up to President Putin.

For the steelworker in Ohio or in Upstate New York whose job is on the line

because China is dumping cheap steel and aluminum into our markets, that is not good enough. For every American concerned about the sanctity of our elections, that is not good enough. When it comes to standing up for the needs of the American worker, for American firms, and for American consumers, when it comes to standing up for American democracy, this President needs to wake up and toughen up.

REPUBLICAN TAX PLAN

Madam President, now on taxes. Today the Finance Committee will begin to mark up the Senate Republican tax plan. The bill put forward by the chairman will not contain the ideas of a single Democrat in the Senate. It is the result of not a single negotiation between our two parties. It has been discussed in exactly zero hearings, its merits weighed by exactly zero expert witnesses.

Rather, the tax bill is one party's backroom deliberations, and though it will affect nearly every person and industry in the country, it is being rushed through committee and may come to the floor of the Senate in a matter of weeks.

The Republican leadership is making a mockery of the legislative process, a mockery of regular order, and the reason for such reckless haste is all too obvious. The product is a wretched one.

If Republicans had crafted a popular bill that could get bipartisan support, they would have announced it with great fanfare and fanned out all over the country to champion it. Instead, it is being rushed through with hardly any consideration because my Republican friends know from their experience with healthcare that the longer an unpopular idea is left out in the open, the more it would fester in the public's mind.

That is what will happen with this tax bill because of one simple reason: It is focused on the wealthy to the exclusion of the middle class. While big corporations and wealthy individuals get lower rates and new permanent loopholes, the middle class gets benefits that expire. Corporations will be able to continue to deduct their State and local taxes while individual taxpayers will not. Wealthy estates worth over \$5 million are ensured a massive tax break while millions of middle-class families lose their popular deductions like the personal exemption.

That is why, according to an analysis by the New York Times, under the House Republican bill, nearly one-third of all middle-class taxpayers will see a tax hike next year. Let me repeat that. Under the House Republican bill, nearly one-third of all middle-class taxpayers will see a tax hike next year, and almost half of middle-class taxpayers will see a hike in 10 years.

According to a JCT analysis of the Senate Republican bill, of all the taxpayers making less than \$200,000 a year, 13 million will see a tax hike next year in 2019, and nearly 20 million Americans will see a tax hike by 2027. An-

other 64 million Americans making under \$200,000 a year will see no change in their taxes. Meanwhile, everyone at the very top, the top 1 percent, will see tax cuts of tens of thousands of dollars. One hundred times more money would go to a family earning \$1 million a year as a family making between \$40,000 and \$50,000.

Now, let me ask you, who needs the tax break more, the family making \$50,000 or the family making \$1 million? God bless the wealthy. So many of them worked hard to achieve great wealth. Good, but they don't need a tax break; middle-class people do.

Now President Trump is suggesting Republicans tip the scales even more in favor of the rich by repealing the individual mandate to pay for more tax cuts for the rich.

Here is what he tweeted. I find this hard to believe. How out of touch can the President be with the American people?

How about ending the unfair and highly unpopular Indiv[idual] Mandate . . . & reducing taxes even further? Cut top rate to 35% w/all of the rest going to middle [class] income cuts.

What does the proposal do? It sends premiums, healthcare premiums, for millions of middle-class Americans skyrocketing, all so that the wealthy—the top bracket—can get even bigger tax breaks than they get under the original Republican plan. The middle class only gets the leftovers, if there are any at all.

Sooner or later, even President Trump's core supporters will realize that he is selling them out. That is why most polls show that less than one-third of Americans support the Republican tax plan, and a majority actually oppose it. That is an astounding fact.

Tax cuts are historically popular. Somehow Republicans have managed to make a tax cut bill politically unpopular, again, for a straightforward reason. On balance, the tax cut is for big corporations and a tiny group of wealthy Americans while millions in the middle class pay more to help finance it. To make tax cuts unpopular is quite a feat. I would urge my Republican colleagues not to fall for the bait.

There is broad agreement on the goals of tax reform between our two parties. We all want to lower middle-class taxes. We all want to reduce the burden on small businesses and encourage companies to locate jobs here in the United States instead of shipping them overseas. We could put a tax bill together that does those things. This bill doesn't.

I know many of my Republican colleagues are concerned about the deficit. They are worried about the one-party legislative ramrodding that is eroding the grand traditions of this body, and they are afraid of passing a tax bill that raises taxes on millions of working Americans in their States.

So I say to my Republican friends: Hit the brakes on this bill. Come back

to the table. We can work on a real bipartisan tax reform bill that delivers middle-class tax relief but only—only—if you defeat this bill first.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont.

MR. LEAHY. Madam President, what is the parliamentary situation?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate is considering the Kan nomination.

MR. LEAHY. I thank the distinguished Acting President pro tempore.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Madam President, over the past 10 months, the Attorney General has testified before the Senate on three occasions about his knowledge of and contacts with Russian operatives. He also answered written questions and provided additional supplemental testimony, but he still has not gotten his story straight. On numerous occasions, new disclosures of his communications involving Russia have raised serious doubts about his testimony, and not one of these disclosures has come from the Attorney General; all have come from the press or unsealed court records. That is a problem.

This started in January. At his nomination hearing, both Senator FRANKEN and I asked him about contacts with Russian officials. I asked him in writing whether he had been in contact with anyone connected to the Russian Government about the 2016 election. It was not a tricky or surprising question. Other Trump officials' undisclosed contacts with Russians, like those of Michael Flynn or Jared Kushner, were major headlines at the time. Under oath, then-Senator Sessions answered with a single word, "no." We soon learned that the answer was "yes"—just the opposite.

In March, the Washington Post reported that Sessions met with Russian Ambassador Kislyak on two occasions during the height of the 2016 campaign. Days later, the Attorney General was forced to recuse himself from the Russia investigation. In June, the press reported on a third undisclosed contact. In July, despite the Attorney General's previous assertions that he never discussed the campaign with Russian officials, U.S. intelligence intercepts reportedly revealed that he had done just that—discussing the campaign and its positions on Russia-related issues with the Russian Ambassador. When I asked the Attorney General about this report in the Judiciary Committee last month, his testimony shifted yet again; he acknowledged that it was "possible" he had those conversations. That flatly contradicts his testimony to me in January.

The disclosures show no sign of stopping. Two weeks ago, unsealed court records revealed additional Russian connections that were discussed during a Trump campaign meeting in March 2016. Then-Senator Sessions reportedly admonished those in attendance to not discuss the issue again out of fear it