American people. I hope that our Democratic friends will join us.

As I said before, until very recently, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle used to support many of the ideas included in this bill. The underlying ideas haven't changed. The urgent need for tax reform hasn't changed. The only thing that has really changed is the occupant of the White House. So I hope Senate Democrats will put aside partisanship and work with us in a serious way to deliver this much needed relief to small businesses and the middle class.

NOMINATION OF DAVID ZATEZALO

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in addition to the other work being done by the committees, the Senate is continuing to confirm qualified and talented nominees sent to us by the President. Yesterday we confirmed an important official for the Department of Transportation, and today we will confirm another.

Then, we will advance the nomination of David Zatezalo to serve as the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health, a position of particular importance in my home State of Kentucky, where mining supports thousands of good jobs.

Mr. Zatezalo has spent a lifetime working in the mining industry. He began as an underground coal miner and worked his way up through the ranks to most recently lead a mining company based in Lexington, KY. He knows about various levels of the business, which would be an important asset as he works with operators, miners, and inspectors to ensure that mining operations are safe for our Nation's mine workers.

Having begun his career as a coal miner himself and having later managed and operated a number of mines, Mr. Zatezalo has a keen understanding of the challenges and risks sometimes associated with mining. This firsthand experience will serve him well in his new role. As Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health, Mr. Zatezalo will be given the responsibility to reduce workplace accidents and promote safe and healthy workplaces for miners.

I strongly support his nomination to serve in this role, and I would ask my colleagues to join me in advancing this nomination.

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 Bradbury nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Steven Gill Bradbury, of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Department of Transportation.

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

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

DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it was 16 years ago that I introduced a bill known as the DREAM Act. The purpose of the DREAM Act was to give undocumented young people brought to the United States under the age of 18 an opportunity to go through a background check and to earn their way to legal status—16 years ago. The bill passed the Senate at various times and it passed the House, though never quite in the same year at the same time.

Now we face a crisis, literally. It is a crisis involving hundreds of thousands of these young people across America. It was just September 5 when the President of the United States announced that he was going to eliminate DACA.

DACA was the Executive order of President Obama that allowed these Dreamers to come forward, pay a filing fee of about $500 or $600, submit themselves to a criminal background check, and, after that background check, if they cleared it, to be given a 2-year allowance to live in the United States without fear of deportation—2 years at a time—and the legal capacity to work. That was what DACA was about.

So 780,000 young people did it. They came forward. They surrendered the information about themselves and their families. They submitted themselves to criminal background checks, and they ended up getting the protection of DACA. They went on to go to school, to go to work, to become teachers or engineers, to go to medical school, and to do things that really mean that they will have a future in this country that will be a benefit to them and to all of us.

So President Trump said that program will end on March 5, 2018, and he established a deadline, for those who were going to see their DACA eligibility end during that period of time, for them to renew. The deadline was October 5. It meant that they had to come forward with the filing fee and at least apply to go through the process again. It was quite a hardship on many of these young people to come up with the money for the filing fee and to realize that the clock was ticking in a very meaningful way about their ability to protect themselves. Many of them stepped forward and asked for help from families, from churches, and from friends to come up with the filing fee to make sure that they renewed their DACA eligibility in time.

Let me tell you what happened to some of them who went through this process.

Here is one case. On September 14, Allison Baker, a lawyer for the Legal Aid Society in New York, sent one of these young individuals' application to renew this permit that would let him stay and work in the United States legally as part of DACA. The date of September 14 should be remembered because the deadline for filing was October 5. To be sure, this lawyer sent this renewal application for this young man by certified mail. Back in the day when I practiced law, that was one way to make sure you had written proof of when you actually mailed something far in advance of a deadline. Tracking data from the U.S. Postal Service showed that the envelope arrived in Chicago on September 16. It was mailed from New York on September 14 and arrived in Chicago September 16, on its way to a regional processing warehouse of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the agency that administers the program known as DACA.

Then the packet started circling the Chicago postal system in a mysterious holding pattern. From September 17 to September 19, it was in transit to destination, according to the Postal Service. Then its tracking whereabouts disappeared until October 4, where, once again, the Postal Service assured the sender that it was "on its way."

On October 6, the day after the deadline, this certified application, which was sent on September 14, arrived, and the application for this 24-year-old man was rejected by our government.

He wasn't alone. We know of at least 33 other cases just like this. Congressman LUIS GUTIÉRREZ, of my State of Illinois, told the story of another application renewal sent on September 13 for an October 5 deadline. It arrived on October 6, as well. Another sent their paperwork on September 21. It wasn't received until October 9. What Congressman GUTIÉRREZ said is very obvious: Because somebody else did not do their job correctly, we are taking innocent young immigrants and making them deportable. That is unacceptable, Congressman GUTIÉRREZ said.

What does the U.S. Postal Service have to say about what I just read to you, those two or three cases? On Thursday, in a rare admission from a Federal agency, the U.S. Postal Service took the blame. David Partenheimer, a spokesman for the Postal Service, said that there had been "an unintentional temporary mail processing delay in the Chicago area."

Remember what I am saying here. Young people, undocumented had applied successfully and had been accepted into the DACA Program. The President announced he was going to end the program, and those—many of them—had to re-sign up, renew, by October 5. They did it. They mailed it. Their application didn't arrive in time.

It doesn't take a big leap of faith or intelligence to realize what should be done. Clearly, this agency should be giving these young people a chance. Once again, they have done everything they can think of to comply with the law and trust our government. They trusted our government to give them DACA status to allow them to stay in the United States, and they trusted the Postal Service, in a matter of 2 weeks, to be able to deliver a letter.

Yesterday I spoke to the USCIS Director, Francis Cissna, and I asked him about this. I said to him: There must be a way for us to acknowledge the obvious. These young people, in good faith, did everything we could ask of them to comply with the law, and now they have been rejected. Now they are subject to deportation because the Postal Service didn't do its job. I asked him: Are you prepared to at least reconsider this decision and give them a chance to renew their DACA status?

He said he was aware of the situation and that it was being considered at the highest levels of the Department of Homeland Security.

I raise this issue because real lives are at stake. These are real people. These are young men and women who are doing everything they can think of to become part of America's future. They are hiring lawyers, they are raising money, and they are filing the documents that are asked of them in the hopes they can stay in the United States of America, and the system is fighting them every step of the way. In this situation, this is totally unfair.

Our government is better than this. Our people are better than this. Our values are better than this. I am pleading with the Department of Homeland Security and those who are seeking positions in that Department to show some common sense and a little bit of heart when it comes to these young people who are simply trying to make a future for themselves and a better United States of America.

REPUBLICAN TAX PLAN

Mr. President, this week, Republicans in Congress are determined to barrel ahead at full speed in a rushed, partisan effort to pass a tax plan at any cost. Make no mistake, for working families in Illinois and across the United States, this is a mistake.

Preliminary analysis from the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation revealed that by 2019, more than 13 million Americans who make less than $200,000 a year will experience not a tax cut but a tax increase under the Senate Republican plan. That number jumps from 13 million to 21 million by the year 2025.

In my State of Illinois, taxpayers at every income bracket are going to see their taxes increase for this tax reform that is being pushed through at the last minute of this session.

Fourteen percent of the middle fifth of taxpayers in Illinois—those who are the very definition of middle income—will see an average tax hike under the Senate plan of $1,400. So much for a tax cut. It is a tax increase. Mr. President, I don't know about taxpayers in your State, but in my home State of Illinois, a $1,400 tax hike is a gut punch to a working family.

That is not all. Further analysis from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities shows that in addition to the millions of households which will see their taxes rise under this Senate Republican plan, 53 million households—that is 40 percent of all households earning less than $200,000 per year—will see no significant tax change under the new plan.

Let's be clear. If you are a middle-income family listening to that and you are thinking you might want to take your chances under this Republican plan, please look at the facts. Even if you are one of the lucky ones who manage not to pay more under the Republican tax plan, make no mistake, when this plan blows a $1.5 trillion hole in our Nation's deficit, it will be working families who end up paying the bill.

When Republicans' fake math indeed falls short and the deficit is skyrocketing, the Republican budget has already identified how they are going to pay for these tax cuts in the future. Are you ready? They are going to do it with an additional $470 billion in cuts in Medicare benefits—Medicare. They are paying for a tax cut for wealthy people by reducing the benefits paid out under Medicare to retired Americans and another $1 trillion cuts in Medicaid. Remember Medicaid? That is the program where the major expense is to maintain the lives and health of two-thirds of Americans who are in nursing homes.

So the Republicans want to give a tax break to the wealthy. They are going to ask seniors who are retired to pay more or receive less from Medicare and make a dramatic cut in Medicaid as well. There is no hiding. Congressional Republicans have made clear that one way or another, working families in America are going to pay for what they call tax reform. At the heart of the Republican playbook for how to bankroll massive tax cuts for the wealthy few and the largest corporations is the elimination of three vital tax breaks for working families.

The House Republican plan will be voted on this week. They are dead set to get this done in a matter of days, and they are going to eliminate in the House plan the medical expense deduction. What does that mean? It means, if someone in your family is diagnosed with a serious illness—God forbid, cancer or whatever it is—and your family ends up incurring massive debts, making sure that person survives, if you incur those debts, you currently can deduct them from your taxes that you pay, but the House Republican plan eliminates the deduction.

In my State of Illinois, 370,000 or more used the medical expense deduction. Their medical bills are that high. The Republicans in the House eliminate that deduction. That isn't going to help working families. It puts them at risk of bankruptcy. The No. 1 reason for bankruptcy in America is medical bills. The House Republican tax plan makes it tougher. More than 370,000 Illinoisans claim an average of a $10,000 deduction for medical expenses, for hospital care, long-term nursing home care, prescription drug costs. That is just wrong.

There is more. The House plan also eliminates the student loan interest deduction. Think about that for a second. Here, we have 1.5 million young people in Illinois paying off student loans. You know what they face: $20,000, $40,000, $60,000, $80,000 in debt. Some of them are still living in their parents' basement because of their student loans. We give them one little break. You know what it is? The deductibility on the interest on student loans, and yet here comes the Republicans to eliminate that deduction.

Why would we ever want to make it harder for these students and their families to pay off that mountain of debt that they incur going to college? But that is part of the so-called Republican tax reform.

They also include the one provision I know my colleague from New York, the Democratic leader, feels very intensely about because our States share the same problem. This compromise proposed in the Senate eliminates the State and local property tax deduction for State income tax, sales tax, and property tax currently in New York and Illinois and many other States. We hold to the basic principle, Americans should not have to pay a tax on a tax.

Unfortunately, the Republicans in the Senate believe they want to change that. The net result of that is to increase dramatically the burden so many taxpaying families already face. We have seen increases in our State income tax. We face regular increases in property taxes. This is the one deduction that gives these families a little bit of help, and Republicans are eliminating it.

It was a week ago when I had a press conference with the Realtors in my State and the homebuilders, who are dramatically opposed to the elimination of this deduction and other changes that are being made when it comes to purchasing homes and homeownership. They have told me: If you want real economic growth in Illinois or any State, you start with people who are building and buying homes. Sadly, the Republican approach, when it comes to tax reform, refuses to take that into consideration.

We need to stand up for working families in our States of Illinois and New York and across this Nation. This tax reform plan that has been proposed by the Republicans, who are determined to get it done in just a matter of a few