

As we wait for the House to take the next steps, I encourage my colleagues in the Senate to review the legislation. We will pass it before the end of the week.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. President, on one final matter, last week, the Senate passed a critical tax reform bill to jump-start the American economy by putting more money into the pockets of hard-working families and small businesses, creating more jobs and economic opportunity, and taking steps to ensure that jobs and business stay right here in America.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, and we are meeting the challenge.

Soon, the House and Senate will meet in conference to produce a final bill so that we can send it to the President's desk. Then the American people can begin to enjoy the relief.

I want to take a few minutes to thank a number of people who were key to getting us to this point. First, President Trump and Vice President PENCE, who fought for the promise they made to the American people to cut their taxes. Their tenacity, commitment to the effort, and engagement with the Senate were invaluable. I look forward to working with them on the many other priorities we plan to deliver for our country. The President and Vice President are great allies, and we will accomplish much, working together.

I also want to acknowledge the efforts of Secretary Mnuchin, Director Cohn, General Kelly, Marc Short, and many others at the White House who worked with us on this effort.

Speaker RYAN, Ways and Means Committee Chairman BRADY, and our friends over in the House have done great work, as well, and we are looking forward to getting a final bill to the President's desk soon.

To my leadership team, who provide good counsel and good humor even in the most trying of times, thank you—most especially to the majority whip, JOHN CORNYN, who is not only a valued colleague but a trusted friend. JOHN and his whip team, led by Monica Popp, helped navigate many challenges along the way. There is no doubt we wouldn't have made it this far without them.

The chairman of the Finance Committee, ORRIN HATCH. His many years of service in the Senate have brought the expertise and steady hand we needed to get this bill written, out of committee, and on to the floor. Not only is ORRIN an expert at legislating, but he also is a trusted friend, and I thank him for his many years of work to get us to this point.

The chairman of the Budget Committee, MIKE ENZI. There are few people around here who understand this complicated process better than Chairman ENZI, and we are grateful to him as well.

The chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, LISA MUR-

KOWSKI. This is an important moment for Alaska and for American energy security.

To the committee staffs: Finance, led by Jay Khosla; Energy and Natural Resources, led by Brian Hughes; Budget, led by Betsy McDonnell; and, of course, the Senate's dean of the tax counsels, Mark Prater—thank you.

There are a number of other Members who have been critical to the process. Senators THUNE, PORTMAN, TOOMEY, and SCOTT took on the yeoman's work in the Finance Committee as we worked to unite our conference on a bill that everyone could support. I will never forget the time and energy they have put into this effort, and I can't thank them enough. My staff calls them the "core four" of tax reform.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Senate Parliamentarians, who worked long hours and weekends with Republicans and Democrats alike to apply the rules of the Senate in a fair and unbiased manner.

The floor staff, doorkeepers, those working for the Sergeant at Arms, Secretary of the Senate, and Architect of the Capitol—those behind the scenes who provide essential support for the Senate whenever we are in session. You are the reason this institution functions so well. In light of the challenges before us, we appreciate your commitment and your service.

To the members of the United States Capitol Police, who stand constant guard and protect the Members, staff, and the millions of visitors who travel here, we are always grateful for your service.

We all know that without our teams on the floor and in the cloakroom, this place simply wouldn't run the way it should. Secretary for the majority, Laura Dove, Robert Duncan, and the whole cloakroom team are invaluable to the work we do each and every day. I would like to thank them for the hours they put in, no matter what the issue of the day may become.

Finally, to my own team—first to Sharon Soderstrom, who leads my staff with focus and commitment to success. I am lucky to have her by my side every day. She makes each of us better by not letting us forget why we are here; that is, to do the right thing for the American people. We have seen a lot of debates together over the last 10 years, and her counsel is always steady and straightforward. She truly is the best of the best.

Don Stewart. Stew keeps us all on our toes but always with a smile. The communications team of Robert Steurer, Antonia Ferrier, David Popp, Stephanie Penn, Kevin Grout, and many more helps communicate in a challenging news environment every single day, and I am so thankful for their efforts.

Hazen Marshall, who has been in the trenches on this every day since we started our work on this bill. Hazen may be the most likeable guy in the Senate but with a backbone of steel.

Jane Lee, my budget lead, smart, cheerful, and determined. To my leader office policy team that gets to work with the committees as well as folks outside the Senate to help keep everyone informed, field questions, and address concerns, I want to thank them all. Scott Raab, Terry Van Doren, and Erica Suarez each played a role in this, and I want to thank them. Phil Maxson and my personal office staff, including Katelyn Conner and Liz Strimer, who each day help my whole team keep Kentucky in the forefront of anything we are working on, I can't thank them all enough.

To many others in both my State operation, especially Terry Carmack, and my leader office team, while I can't name everyone by name, know my appreciation goes to each of you as well. Of course, Stef Muchow, my director of operations, keeps everything running, is always working, and I can't imagine this success without her.

Finally, to the man who has been the steady hand in the tax reform effort in my office, Brendan Dunn. His leadership and counsel over the last several months has been absolutely unparalleled. Brendan, many days, worked around the clock to hear from our Members on what they were hearing from our constituents and helped us get to passage of this incredibly significant piece of legislation. He worked with the committees to draft language, rework ideas, present thoughts, and prioritize Member feedback. I couldn't be more proud of Brendan and the work he has done.

Brendan, you have my deep gratitude and admiration for how you have helped manage this critical bill. It is an honor to call you a colleague and also a friend.

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. 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.

REPUBLICAN TAX PLAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in the early hours of Saturday morning, under the cover of darkness, the Republican majority rushed through one of the worst, most hastily considered pieces of major legislation I have seen in my time in the Senate.

The bill will cause one of the greatest transfers of wealth to corporate America and the already wealthy, while working America picks up the tab. Millions of middle-class families will pay higher taxes under the Republican plan in only a few short years. Because the bill is unpaid for, the deficit will skyrocket, cannibalizing resources for education, scientific research, infrastructure, and our military, endangering Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

As I said last week, I have not seen a more regressive piece of legislation so devoid of a rationale, so ill suited for the condition of the country, so removed from the reality of what the American people need.

The text of the bill itself was released in the early evening, only several hours before a final vote took place. Lobbyists had a chance to read and change the bill before Members of the U.S. Senate. When we received the bill, there were sections of text handwritten in the margins concerning some of the most complex tax provisions. The Joint Committee on Taxation was not even able to produce an analysis of the bill until after the final vote took place at around 2 or 3 in the morning.

Amid such haste, the Republican majority likely made drafting errors and inclusions that will have unintended consequences, even severe ones. Amid such secrecy, such cloak-and-dagger legislating, the majority slipped in several additional goodies for big corporations and the very wealthy that are already being uncovered. I am sure even more will come to light in the coming days.

The appalling process we all witnessed led Bloomberg News—a middle-of-the-road, business-oriented publication—to write the following in an editorial today:

In their rush to pass something, anything, that they can call “tax reform,” congressional Republicans have achieved the impossible: They have made an awful plan even worse. The end result is sheer absurdity: a reform that actually complicates the tax code further, and that must contradict itself and partially self-destruct to attain some semblance of the fiscal discipline Republicans claim to value. It’s hard to imagine a more egregious waste of time and energy, or a worse outcome for taxpayers and the broader economy.

That is Bloomberg News, not some leftwing publication. It is a business publication. If they can say that, imagine what average Americans are saying. What a condemnation from a publication that would be inclined to favor tax reform. In short, my Republican friends ought to be ashamed of the process and the product that emerged from the Senate last week.

As the two Houses of Congress prepare to go to conference, I suggest that my Republican colleagues reconsider their efforts and think again on how much better of a product we could produce through a bipartisan, open, and transparent process. Regardless, with so much left to do before the end of the year, the Republicans should not be devoting their energies toward the conference on tax reform because this bill, in both the House and Senate, needs dramatic repair.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING BILL

Madam President, on the year-end matter, the most pressing matter before the Senate this week is not tax reform. That has no immediate deadline. Rather, it is to make sure that we keep the government up and running on Fri-

day. Nobody should want to see a government shutdown. We should all be working to avoid one. I must say that I don’t believe my Republican friends, Leader MCCONNELL and Speaker RYAN, want a government shutdown. The only one at the moment who has flirted with a shutdown is President Trump, who tweeted earlier this year that we could use a “good ‘shutdown’ . . . to fix [the] mess” and was quoted in last week’s Washington Post suggesting to associates that a shutdown could help him politically.

While congressional negotiators have continued the hard work of hashing out a deal, the President’s unproductive behavior has been the only monkey wrench in the process. It is difficult to find a consensus when one of the parties at the table tweets that he “doesn’t see a deal.”

In a very positive development, however, the White House has reached out and asked for a second meeting with congressional leadership. We hope the President will go to this meeting with an open mind, rather than deciding that an agreement can’t be reached beforehand, as he did before the first meeting.

We need to reach a budget agreement that equally boosts funds for our military and key priorities here at home, including: the opioid crisis, pension plans, veterans healthcare, student loan debt relief, and rural infrastructure. We have to provide funding for community health centers and CHIP, as well as relief for the millions of Americans still reeling from the natural disasters that hit us earlier this year. We also must come together on a bipartisan deal to pass the Dream Act, along with tough border security measures. There is a bipartisan path forward on every one of these items.

As negotiations with our Republican counterparts continue, we are hopeful the President will be open to an agreement to address the urgent needs of the American people and keep the government open.

I yield the floor.

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. CORNYN. 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.

TAX CUTS AND JOBS BILL

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, as the world knows by now, last Friday night—I guess early in the morning on Saturday—we passed the Senate’s version of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the first major overhaul of our Nation’s tax system in more than 30 years.

I want to express my gratitude to Chairman HATCH, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, who shepherded that bill through the com-

mittee. I thank him for his leadership, as well as that of Chairman ENZI, who led the reconciliation process in the Budget Committee. I know it is a complex, convoluted, and arcane process, but we couldn’t have done it without both of those gentlemen.

I also commend our majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, and all of our colleagues who worked together for proceeding with final passage and for negotiating in good faith. I have said before, and I will say it again, that one of the differences between this and healthcare reform is that everyone, I believe, on our side of the aisle wanted to get to yes, wanted to find a way to find a solution, and that goes a long way to getting to a solution.

Last week, the majority leader rightfully referred to the process as a once-in-a-generation opportunity, and he is right. I am glad we got this bill across the finish line and will soon deliver to the American people the tax relief they deserve. Notwithstanding some of the propaganda that has been disseminated on this, the fact is, this bill benefits Americans of all stripes, including low-income families.

Well, let me just start there. This bill doubles the standard deduction, which means a married couple earning up to \$24,000 will pay zero tax on that \$24,000 of earnings. Above that, we have raised the child tax credit to \$2,000 per child. The first \$1,000 of that \$2,000 is refundable. That means that even if you don’t pay income taxes, if you don’t make enough money to pay income taxes, you will still get the benefit of at least half of that child tax credit. It also reduces the tax bracket for low-income families as well. The bill lowers the current 15-percent rate and increases the child tax credit, both of which help persons of modest means.

This bill also helps the broad middle class. Some of our colleagues ran around like “Chicken Little” during the debate on this bill, saying that eliminating certain deductions will disproportionately harm hard-working families, but that is just not true. A family of four earning the median income of about \$73,000 will see their taxes cut by nearly \$2,200. That may be chickenfeed to some of the folks inside the beltway, but that is real tax relief for hard-working, middle-class families. We also preserve the home mortgage and charitable deductions, and families will enjoy an enhanced child tax credit which, as I mentioned earlier, along with the larger standard deduction, will help them significantly.

Finally, this bill effectively repeals ObamaCare’s individual mandate. Some have called this a tax on the poor, which it is because 80 percent of the people who pay the tax or the mandate penalty earn \$50,000 or less, and that is because they can’t afford to buy the government-approved health insurance. So their own government, rather than help them find affordable health coverage that suits their needs that they can afford, mandates they buy a