

comes to speaking. I wish to finish my remarks, but if I can have the permission of the Chair by unanimous consent and allow the majority leader to speak and then resume my statement after he is finished.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I thank my friend from Illinois.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

#### NOMINATION OF KIRSTJEN NIELSEN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, the Senate voted to advance the nomination of Kirstjen Nielsen to be Secretary of Homeland Security. Now it is time for us to vote to confirm her so she can get to work for the American people. By confirming Ms. Nielsen's nomination to lead the DHS, this Senate will take a serious step toward strengthening our Nation's security.

Ms. Nielsen will be charged with leading the Department at a critical time. With her understanding of the challenges facing our Nation and her experience in prevention and preparedness, I believe she will excel as the next Secretary of Homeland Security. Her leadership will also help in providing continued assistance to the men and women still suffering from the effects of the recent natural disasters in our country. Our Nation faces a myriad of threats, and I look forward to working with Ms. Nielsen to address each of them.

#### FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as we all know, we must pass legislation to fund the government before the end of the week. By approving a short-term bill, we can continue the crucial functions of the Federal Government while we work with our colleagues in the House and the Trump administration to finalize a long-term plan.

The temporary funding measure will come before the House soon, and I expect the Senate to consider it shortly thereafter. It is a clean bill, free from any sort of objectionable policy riders. In addition, it includes a provision to assure States of the future of the Children's Health Insurance Program while a bipartisan reauthorization agreement is completed. All Members should be able to support this noncontroversial, short-term legislation.

We will continue working to pass a funding agreement that advances a number of American priorities—something we will be discussing with the President on Thursday, along with Democratic leaders of the House and Senate.

Yesterday, the Senate Democratic leader expressed his opposition to a government shutdown. I certainly agree with him. So I hope he and his fellow Democrats will continue to work with us in good faith to pass this short-term funding bill and maintain the critical functions of the Federal Government.

#### TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, one final matter. Last night, our colleagues in the House voted to send the tax reform legislation to a conference committee. There, Members from both Chambers will work to resolve the differences in our bills and eventually enable us to send a final product to the President for his signature.

The House's action last night is more progress in our years-long effort to deliver real relief to the men and women we represent. I am grateful to our friends in the House for their willingness to continue working with us to help shift our economy into high gear. I look forward to the Senate voting to join the conference later this week.

In the end, both Chambers will have an opportunity to pass the final legislation to help families keep more of their hard-earned money, to create good jobs, and to jump-start economic growth. I look forward to working with all of our colleagues to get this done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

#### NATIONAL MONUMENTS DESIGNATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, resuming my earlier remarks, the Native-American Tribes almost unanimously opposed the action that was announced yesterday by President Trump and Secretary Zinke to shrink the Bears Ears Monument. They have passed resolutions in support of that monument.

Navajo Nation's president said that the President's efforts to shrink the monument "demonstrates their failure to listen to the concerns of our people who have lobbied and fought for over 80 years for this designation." Even worse, the Navajo Nation made several requests to meet with President Trump on the issue, to no avail. Those requests fell on deaf ears, and the administration never met with the leadership of the Navajo Nation or any of the other Tribes who worked to protect this area.

The administration took these actions under the guise of protecting this area for future generations. During President Trump's speech in Utah, he said:

I don't think it is controversial, actually. I think it's so sensible.

From the folks he was speaking to, it must have seemed that his comment was correct, but the group the President was speaking to was a closed-door group of selected supporters of his ad-

ministration who do not reflect the feelings of local residents when it comes to the future of this monument. It reflected the same closed-door process this administration had used to shrink these monuments.

The administration ignored that more than 2.8 million Americans weighed in when there was an open public comment period at the Department of the Interior. Ninety-eight percent of them asked the President to protect the monuments and to maintain their borders—98 percent. So to say that shrinking these monuments dramatically is not controversial is to ignore 2.8 million Americans and the Tribes with whom the President never took the time to meet.

With these reductions, it is clear that Secretary Zinke and President Trump are choosing politics over science and choosing economic and political local concerns over the reality of what this particular monument means to the future of America. They are ignoring Utah's State Historic Preservation Office and the Interior Department's own staff, both confirming that there are artifacts throughout Bears Ears that will now lose their protection because of the decision by President Trump yesterday. The administration's proposed cuts closely follow the desires of Utah politicians to shrink the monument.

I had the opportunity to meet with Secretary Zinke and some of my colleagues a few weeks ago to discuss this reduction in the size of the monuments. In that meeting, he assured me that any potential cuts to Bears Ears would continue to protect the actual site's antiquities, including archeological sites, but according to the internal documents from the Department of the Interior, there are more than 8,400 archeological sites in the monument, 70 percent of which are prehistoric. Even more interesting, according to the Department of the Interior staff, less than 10 percent of the monument has truly been surveyed. That means we have only scratched the surface of the antiquities that could be present there.

What value is it to the people of Utah, what value is it to San Juan County, UT, what value is it to the United States to allow spectators and tourists to roam over these areas without acknowledging their sacred status and historic importance? We only get one chance to preserve our history, and now the President is walking away from that chance for the largest part of the Bears Ears Monument. Taking away protections from these precious places is something that could lead to permanent damage.

During the time that I visited Bears Ears, I stopped near Fry Canyon for a little lunch. I hiked around and saw some amazing artifacts, which I showed in the earlier photograph. These amazing artifacts are outside the new boundaries President Trump decided to draw yesterday. These impressive artifacts are worth preserving, but

President Trump and Secretary Zinke don't agree. They have left Fry Canyon unprotected.

I went to some of the areas where, centuries ago, Native Americans drew artwork on the sides of these canyons, in the walls. It is still very visible, and it should be protected. Some of it has been desecrated and obliterated by graffiti. How can we possibly justify that? How can we say to future generations: We just didn't care enough to keep this intact so that you and your children and grandchildren could appreciate it.

I know there are many more areas like Fry Canyon throughout the original Bears Ears Monument that are no longer protected because President Trump and Secretary Zinke decided to draw new boundary lines.

While I was visiting in Moab, UT, in one of the tourist shops there, I heard a group of about 12 speaking on the other side of the shop, and I drew a little closer just to hear what they might be saying. They were speaking in French. They had traveled all the way from Europe to see this unique area, so critically important to them, so unimportant to this administration. These tourists' willingness to travel halfway around the world tells us that we have something special here. I really wish the President could have met with them and so many others who create a bustling tourist economy in this area, people who come halfway around the world to see it. They believe it is something worth seeing. We should believe it is something worth preserving.

The residents of Moab, just outside the monument, must recognize this. Once a mining town with a dubious future, Moab saw its economy decline as the industry left during the 1980s. But the town has experienced a new rebirth, an economic growth of tourism that now provides up to 40 percent of the jobs in the area.

Last year, National Geographic named Moab, UT, one of the best outdoor towns in the world. Ely, MN, is the other U.S. town to receive that honor. The people of Moab will tell you that the protection of public lands has been good for their economy, creating good-paying jobs, new hotels, and new opportunities, and that they support the Bears Ears Monument. But President Trump didn't pay attention to them, and neither did Secretary Zinke.

According to the Department of the Interior, the number of visitors to Utah increased 20 percent between 2011 and 2015 and is projected to continue increasing. But that didn't impress the Secretary of the Interior when it came to literally obliterating 80 percent of the original Bears Ears Monument that President Obama designated.

It was the University of Utah that found that tourists spent more than \$8 billion in their State in 2015, resulting in more than \$1 billion in State and local tax revenue and more than 142,000 jobs.

When the State is benefiting so much from tourism, why would they give

away the protection of an area that attracts so many people and creates so many businesses and jobs in their own State? With public lands providing such a boon for tourism and economic growth, it is hard to believe that the Utah congressional delegation has ignored this and pushed so hard to destroy these monuments.

The dispute has roots in debate over federally controlled land and Utah's Enabling Act, which was signed more than 100 years ago. When it became a State, Utahns passed a bill to "agree and declare that they forever disclaimed all right and title to the unappropriated public lands . . . and to all lands lying within said limits owned or held by any Indian or Indian tribes." This provision gave all lands not specifically claimed by the State of Utah to the Federal Government. Utah signed up for that. That is how they became a State.

As a result, Utah now has the second most Federal land of any State, with Federal lands making up about 65 percent of their State, including five national parks and eight national monuments. These lands are a source of pride and economic opportunity for so many people. Yet the politicians of Utah don't appreciate that.

Last year, 15 million people visited national parks and monuments in Utah, hiking, camping, and learning the traditions and history of the Native people in that State. Let me say that again. Fifteen million people from around the world visited public lands in Utah in 2016—an 82 percent increase in visitors over the past decade. This is not only the right thing to do; it is the economically sensible thing to do to protect these monuments and these areas. Despite this growth, there is a push by some of Utah's politicians to force the Federal Government to give up these lands and remove the protections for the cultural and archeological resources they contain.

When I met with Secretary Zinke to discuss his recommendations, he confirmed to me that this decision was not based on protecting some of the most extraordinary natural resources in our Nation but, rather, on protecting political alliances.

Every monument designation has had some opposition. Even Roosevelt faced opposition when he worked to protect many of America's iconic places, but despite the opposition, President Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican, protected the Grand Canyon—a controversial decision in his time—and other special places. Thank goodness he did. Thank goodness he had the vision to look forward to future generations instead of looking backward to political promises and political buddies.

Teddy Roosevelt is remembered for his conservation record, preserving many of the places that make America a great nation, but what this administration is doing is just the opposite of Teddy Roosevelt's courage and vision. Repealing protections for Bears Ears

and Grand Staircase-Escalante will not make America great again. It will give up America's greatness for selfish interest.

I urge President Trump and Secretary Zinke to reconsider their decision that rescinds our national monument protection. It will be challenged in court, and it may take a long time to resolve, but I hope ultimately the courts of this land stand up for the right of a President of either political party to make these designations, as they have so many times before. We owe it to America, but we owe it especially to the Native American Tribes and people who have forever called this land home to preserve the sites that are so sacred to them, and we owe it to those in the scientific community and to future generations.

I am hopeful that future generations will be able to visit Bears Ears—as my wife and I have—and learn about the people and culture that made America long before we arrived. It is worth the respect of this generation and future generations, and it is certainly worth it for us to step forward and to say with vision and with courage that we stand behind preserving these sites.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, even as my Republican friends move to reconcile their two tax bills in a conference committee, their problems are far from over.

At the heart of their bill is a toxically unpopular idea—giant tax breaks on big corporations and the very wealthy, paid for by cutting care and raising taxes on millions of middle-class families. The new Republican Party is the party of tax hikes on the middle class to subsidize corporate welfare. That menacing idea at the core of its bill is a problem that, like Hydra, spouts many heads.

Slashing the State and local deduction remains a massive problem for House Republicans from suburban districts like Virginia, New York, Illinois, Washington, and, of course, California. Multiple analyses have shown that, despite the so-called compromise that allows families to deduct up to \$10,000 in property taxes, the pain inflicted on suburban families will not be much mitigated. States like California and