

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

New York will still experience an exodus of taxpayers, which will drain local resources and impact services. For those House Republicans, voting for the conference report is a poisonous vote, substantively and politically, not to mention that home values will fall in those districts of those House Republicans. If they are voting to decrease home values by 10 or 8 percent for every homeowner in their districts, that is political suicide. Why would they do it? That is what will happen, and the homeowners will start seeing that right away.

Another problem: The last-minute inclusion of a corporate AMT has Republicans and corporate leaders scrambling to figure out if it will have the unintended consequence of functionally eliminating the value of the R&D tax credit. Remember, the corporate AMT was added at the last minute because Republicans needed more revenue to offset a generous rate on passthroughs.

That is what Republicans were working on in the waning hours of last week, not trying to figure out how we could help middle-class families with kids in college, with kids who have serious medical expenses, and not reducing the impact that it would have on our deficit. Oh, no. They were busy figuring out how to make tax cuts for the wealthy even more generous as 70 percent of our passthrough income already flows to the top 1 percent, not the top 20 percent, not the top 10 percent—the top 1 percent. There is 70 percent of passthrough income that goes to the top 1 percent of earners. The Republican tax bill already slashed the rate on passthroughs, but several Republican Senators withheld their votes until that loophole was widened further.

I understand that they wanted to help smaller businesses, but take the time and figure out how to help the small businesses without helping the hedge funds, corporate law firms, the big lobbying firms, and other wealthy individuals. Take the time to figure it out—but no. In the rush to get a crumb for small business owners, they are giving a whole, big, nice chocolate layer cake to the wealthy. It is wrong, very wrong.

The inclusion of the corporate AMT is another reminder that Republicans cannot have it both ways. You cannot cut every conceivable tax on big corporations and the wealthy without blowing up the deficit. If Republicans are forced to go back and look at the corporate AMT, they will have to find revenue elsewhere. Will they slightly lessen another corporate tax break or will they ask working Americans to pay more, which they have done in previous iterations on this bill?

Yesterday, we learned the Republican leadership circulated talking points that questioned the legitimacy of the Joint Committee on Taxation—the nonpartisan, independent scorekeepers of tax legislation. Rather than con-

front the awful truth that their bill will not pay for itself as it, instead, costs about \$1 trillion even with dynamic growth estimates, the Republican leadership asked its Members to shoot the messenger. The JCT, which is widely respected and always accepted by both parties, is, all of a sudden, a pariah in Republican circles because it told the truth—that this bill would not cause the growth they projected, that this bill will increase the deficit far more than the Republicans had hoped.

The Republican leadership tried to discredit the nonpartisan umpire it had long praised and had appointed. What a disgrace. It brings up that what has happened in the last week or two here has been one of the most disgraceful episodes in the history of the Senate—a major bill done behind closed doors, rushed through. Then, adding insult to injury, the truth-tellers—the independent, appointed-by-Republican monitors—were discredited because our Republican colleagues didn't like hearing the answer.

There is still time to avert this awful bill. If my Republican friends vote no on the conference bill, we can do a bipartisan tax reform bill. We can pursue a much better process and get a much better product and go so far as to heal a Senate that has been wounded by partisanship and strife, greatly aggravated by the majority's actions on this tax bill.

ISSUES BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, instead of rushing a bad tax bill through the conference, the Senate should focus on the bevy of year-end issues confronting us. First and foremost, we must reach a spending bill that would have us meet our commitments to support the military and also urgent priorities here at home, such as combating the opioid crisis, shoring up pension plans, supporting veterans' healthcare, relieving student loan debt, and building rural infrastructure.

In previous budget agreements, Democrats have always strived to achieve parity between our investments in defense and jobs and economic development here at home. It has continually been a sticking point with Republicans as we go through these negotiations. They want to increase the spending for defense, the military, but shortchange important domestic programs such as infrastructure, education, scientific research—measures that create jobs and help the middle class. We Democrats support an increase for our military, but we want to make sure other crucial programs don't get left behind. So we will fight just as hard in this budget agreement to ensure that for each dollar we add for defense, a dollar is added for domestic economic development, 50-50.

We care about our soldiers. They are the greatest. They are risking their lives for us, but we also care about a pensioner who spent his whole life

working in the steel mills, working driving a truck, working building buildings. They religiously put money away every month so they would have something when they retire, and if it is not there—they are important too.

General Mattis came to see me and told me how badly our Defense Department needs help. I agree, but I told him to go back to the White House and tell the White House the domestic side of the ledger needs help as well. Spending on the domestic side of the ledger is lower than it was in 2010, despite increased costs.

We also need to provide funding for Community Health Centers, the Children's Health Insurance Program, relief for millions of Americans still recovering from national disasters, and we must come together on a bipartisan bill to support the Dream Act along with tougher border security measures. So it is a lengthy to-do list. It will require hard work, steady cooperation, and compromise on both sides.

Last night, however, there was a concerning spectacle on the House floor. The freedom caucus held up an unrelated vote on the tax bill—who could figure—because they were unsatisfied with the Republican leadership's plan to keep the government open. If we are going to solve all the problems that confront us before the end of the year, House leaders cannot let the Freedom Caucus—a small band of hard-right reactionary conservatives—run the show. If they cooperate with Democrats, they can accomplish something. To just let the Freedom Caucus dictate is a recipe for chaos.

Once again, negotiations broke off because we were at an impasse on the 50-50 parity for defense and nondefense. That has been very important to Democrats for years. We have settled our budget agreements, our spending policy, omnibus agreements always with 50-50, and we believe it is still important today—parity, parity, parity.

As we continue to negotiate with our Republican counterparts, we hope the Republican leadership can avert more of this unnecessary hostage-taking like we saw on the House floor last night that can only impede a serious, ongoing bipartisan negotiation.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. STRANGE). Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Nielsen nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Kirstjen