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## Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, fill us with reverence for You. Help us to remember that You are the one from whom we borrow our heartbeats. You continue to be the source of our peace and the center of our joy. May our reverential awe provide us with the foundation of true wisdom. Empower our lawmakers to make a positive difference in our Nation and world.

Lord, give them generous, righteous, and compassionate hearts so that they will transform discord into harmony. As they turn to You in humble, fervent prayer, hear our prayers, forgive our sins, and heal our land.

Lord, we thank You that You will never give us more to do than we can do with Your power.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. SASSE). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 165, S. 1519.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 165, S. 1519, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2018 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

#### TAX CUTS AND JOBS BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, Congress is standing at the doorstep of a historic opportunity. Today the House will vote on the conference report on the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the most significant overhaul of our Nation's Tax Code in more than 30 years. This major tax reform legislation will provide much needed relief to middle-class families and small businesses and will set America on a trajectory toward more opportunity and greater prosperity.

After the House votes this afternoon, the Senate will begin debate and will proceed to a vote on passage later this evening. The final text of this bill is the product of extensive open debate. It is a result of dozens of hearings on tax reform in recent years and an open amendment process. Then, the House and the Senate joined together in a conference committee that carefully reconciled the two Chambers' bills.

Now the time has come to vote. When Senators vote for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, they will be voting for a bill that substantially cuts taxes for middle-class families. By reducing rates, it will let working Americans keep more of their paychecks and send less of their hard-earned money to Washington.

In addition to lower rates, middle-class families will benefit from a standard deduction that is almost double its present level and from a doubling of the child tax credit. They will benefit from the ability to deduct more of their medical expenses, increasing their tax savings during difficult times.

Despite what opponents of the bill have claimed, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act achieves all this while preserving charitable deductions and the adoption tax credit. It protects the exemption for university tuition benefits. A mortgage interest deduction remains, as does a deduction for State and local taxes.

The result is a comprehensive tax reform bill that does what we set out to do: take money out of Washington's pocket and put it back into the pockets of middle-class Americans who earned it. Consider a typical family of four who earns the median family income. A vote for the conference report is a vote to cut their tax bill by more than \$2,000 next year.

After a disappointing decade of stagnant wages and shrinking opportunity under the Obama administration, middle-class families are counting on Congress to keep our promise and give them that much needed relief.

In addition to directly cutting taxes for American families, this landmark bill will also set America on a trajectory toward higher wages and better job opportunities by making our country a better place to do business. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act contains a number of provisions that will make it easier to run and grow a small business, to create jobs, and to invest right here in the United States.

The bill creates new tax relief for Main Street businesses. It makes it easier for American companies to bring their earnings back home instead of parking that money elsewhere. It eliminates incentives to shift jobs and manufacturing overseas and replaces them with new incentives to invest and expand operations here at home.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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To make America more competitive in the global economy, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act cuts our corporate tax rate from 35 percent—one of the highest rates in the developed world—to 21 percent. This is good news for workers. As more than 100 economists agreed in a recent open letter, “the question isn’t whether American workers are hurt by our country’s corporate tax rate—it’s how badly.”

Another expert put it this way in a recent op-ed: It is “the consensus view of professional economists” that “lowering corporate income taxes would increase the wages of workers.” Perhaps that is why reforming the corporate tax rate used to be a bipartisan goal. During the previous administration, prominent Democrats said they supported bringing our rate in line with our competitors overseas.

There may be a new occupant of the White House, but the need for reform has not changed. I hope our colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support this pro-growth, pro-worker policy.

It is no wonder that job creators are enthusiastic about what they will be able to accomplish when tax reform becomes law. I recently received a letter from the chief operating officer of a construction equipment dealer in my hometown of Louisville. This is a direct quote: “We’ll hire more employees and plan investments in our company that we weren’t considering prior to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.”

This bill will also help Americans by repealing a punitive tax at the very heart of ObamaCare. For low- and middle-income families who are suffering under the individual mandate tax—including many in my home State of Kentucky—repeal means relief. If the health insurance plans available under ObamaCare are not affordable or not desirable, the blame lies with that failing law, not with Americans who are already struggling to make ends meet. It is unfair and illogical to penalize them further because ObamaCare is failing to meet their needs. By erasing this individual mandate tax, we will give Americans both tax relief and healthcare flexibility—two things that ObamaCare failed to provide.

There is one more element of this bill that deserves special attention. It provides the Nation, and particularly the people of Alaska, with a tremendous opportunity to develop the State’s bountiful natural resources. In 1980 Congress set aside a particular non-wilderness area within Alaska’s National Wildlife Refuge for potential development of its oil and gas resources. This bill is our chance to finally make good on that promise, enhancing our country’s energy security and creating good-paying jobs in the process.

Unlocking the resources of this area will provide a boon to Alaska’s economy, but more broadly, it will also advance America’s standing as an energy superpower, helping to cut Americans’ energy costs and strengthening our national security.

For too long, special interests have stood in the way of responsible development. The people of Alaska have shown time and again that resource development can go hand in hand with environmental protection, and surface development will be limited to just one ten-thousandth of the total land in the reserve. It is long past time to finish what Congress started almost 40 years ago and to begin reaping the benefits of responsible development.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will deliver historic tax relief to American families. It will help put our country on a trajectory toward more innovation and better paying jobs. It will repeal an unfair tax at the center of ObamaCare and will help America achieve greater energy security.

So this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. I want to commend the work of Chairman HATCH, Chairman ENZI, and Chairman MURKOWSKI to bring it within reach. I urge all of our colleagues to join me in voting to approve the conference report and complete this victory for the American people.

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. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12 noon, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The majority whip.

#### JOBS FOR OUR HEROES BILL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the House will pass a bill today called the Jobs for Our Heroes Act, which I hope will be quickly signed into law by the President.

This bill streamlines a process by which Active-Duty military, reservists, and veterans can apply for commercial driver’s licenses. As the Presiding Officer knows, and as people may know generally, there is a shortage of people who can get a commercial driver’s license and fill these well-paying jobs.

This bill will also allow States to permanently waive license requirements for current servicemembers and National Guardsmen if they have military experience in driving comparable vehicles. That way, members of the military will not have to go through the same old rigmarole twice, wherein they get trained in the military, then get out, and the civilian world ignores the fact that they had been trained and had gotten qualified in the military. This bill fixes that.

I am honored to have a broad range of bipartisan support for this legislation. One would hope something like this would. I thank Congressman ROB WOODALL, who played a key role in helping to get this bill through the House.

I hope, with this bill being signed into law, more members of our military will be able to utilize the skills they acquired while they were in the military to be able to qualify for well-paying jobs in our communities. We continue to use our best efforts to keep faith with our veterans who have done so much for all of us.

#### TAX CUTS AND JOBS BILL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the second matter I would like to address is the historic vote that the House will take today and that we will take later on this evening on the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

This bill will dramatically reduce taxes on American families and incentivize the creation of new jobs. It is a major victory for all Americans who want to know that Washington has their best interests at heart. It does exactly what we told the voters we would do in 2016, and it is important to keep our word. We are delivering tax reform in a way that is real, comprehensive, and substantial, and we are doing it through what we usually refer to as regular order in the Senate.

I know that ever since the Affordable Care Act was written in then-Democratic Leader Harry Reid’s conference room and was brought to the floor, there has been a lot of concern about the way the Senate conducts its activities. Senator MCCAIN, who unfortunately will not be able to be with us today, has been a stickler for returning to regular order—by that, meaning introducing a bill, having it marked up and debated in the relevant committee—in this case, in the Finance Committee—then having it brought to the floor, where it is amended, and then debating it until we finally pass it. Then we go to a conference committee with the House and reconcile the differences between the Senate version and the House version. That is exactly what we did with this piece of legislation.

I have spoken at length about certain provisions in the bill before, but I want to make one point abundantly clear. For the American people, this represents the very best kind of Christmas gift we can offer them—one that will actually make their lives better and one from which they will benefit right away. This tax reform may not bear the ribbons and bows of a Christmas present, but the men and women who are trying to make ends meet will benefit from having lower taxes, bigger paychecks, and a resurgent economy that will produce more jobs and better opportunities.

I will refer to an article that came out in January of this year which cited