

continuing the CHIP program. For two decades now, I have been a supporter of CHIP, and I worked with Members of both parties to keep it moving forward and functioning properly—even in times when my Democratic colleagues have pursued a more divisive approach with the program. That commitment continues to this day.

On October 4, the Senate Finance Committee unanimously reported a bipartisan bill that would reauthorize CHIP for 5 years. In my view, a long-term reauthorization is essential so that States, including my home State of Utah, can plan well into the future and the families who benefit from CHIP can be sure that coverage for their needy children won't just disappear.

It appears that the year-end continuing resolution could include a short-term reauthorization for CHIP. That is far from ideal, and as the leading advocate for this program, I have no desire to see it become subject to repeated short-term fixes and constantly looming deadlines.

I intend to continue working with Senator WYDEN and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in both the Senate and the House to enact the KIDS Act in a fiscally responsible manner as soon as possible. Doing so is essential to providing certainty for families and States.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, with this week's passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, many throughout the country are rightly celebrating the first substantive reform of our Nation's Tax Code in more than three decades.

While the popular narrative surrounding this bill has been that Congress has moved quickly to pass this legislation, I don't think anyone who has worked on tax reform over the last several years would agree with that assessment. This week's success is made possible by years of hard work and the efforts of countless policymakers, experts, advocates, and public servants.

Over the last several years, I have come to the floor on many occasions to advocate for tax reform. I am glad today to be able to rise and acknowledge the efforts of many people whose work made the historic occasion possible.

First, I would like to thank those Members who went before us. Former Chairmen Camp, GRASSLEY, and Baucus spent the better part of the decade laying the groundwork for this effort.

I also want to thank Senator WYDEN, who, along with Chairman Baucus, worked with me on the Finance Committee over the last several years as we produced reports and options papers, convened bipartisan working groups, and held more than 70 hearings to discuss tax policy.

While I have been disappointed that my Democratic colleagues have opted not to participate in this year's efforts to produce this particular bill, they

definitely contributed to this knowledge and policy base we worked from to put our legislation together.

For years, I have reiterated the importance of Presidential leadership when it comes to tax reform. I am grateful that President Trump has been willing to engage with Congress on this issue and to put some political skin in the game in order to move us forward.

From the outset of this administration, Secretary Mnuchin and Director Cohn have been actively working to make this success a reality. I thank them for their engagement in this effort and the work they and their staffs have put in.

From the Treasury staff, I would like to thank Justin Muzinich, Dan Kowalski, and Jay Mackie.

From Director Cohn's staff at the National Economic Council, I need to thank Jeremy Katz and Shahira Knight.

From the White House, thanks to Mark Short, Amy Swonger, Andy Koenig, Joseph Lai, and Jim Goyer.

These staffers from the administration have worked for the better part of the year with leaders from both Chambers to produce this bill and get it over the finish line. Their success is shared with our colleagues over in the House, led by Chairman BRADY and Speaker RYAN. I thank my colleagues for their hard work and their willingness to find common ground when many believed that it was impossible to do so.

From the Ways and Means staff, I want to thank David Stewart, Matt Weidinger, Allison Halataei, Rick Limardo, and Paul Guaglianone. Special thanks is owed to the committee tax staff: Barbara Angus, Aharon Friedman, John Sandell, Victoria Glover, John Schoenecker, Randy Gartin, Aaron Junge, Donald Scheider, Danielle Dubose, Kathryn Chakmak, and Loren Ponds.

From the Speaker's office, I want to thank Jonathan Burks, Austin Smythe, George Callas, Derrick Dockery, and Josh Althouse.

From the House majority whip's office, I need to thank both Marty Reiser and Kelly Hudak.

Of course, here in the Senate, we have been ably led by the majority leader. I want to thank Senator McCONNELL for his commitment to get this done and for his leadership throughout this entire endeavor.

From the leader's staff, I want to thank Sharon Soderstrom, Brendan Dunn, Antonia Ferrier, Hazen Marshall, Erica Suares, Terry Van Doren, Don Stewart, and Jane Lee.

Joining Senator McCONNELL, as always, has been our distinguished majority whip. I thank Senator CORNYN for his efforts in shoring up support and addressing our Members' concerns from the beginning of this process until final passage of the conference report.

From the whip's staff, I want to thank Monica Popp and Sam Beaver.

Of course, when it came time to draft the Senate's tax reform legislation,

most of the real work was done in the Finance Committee. The committee bill was truly a shared product that included the input and addressed the interests of every majority member on our dais. Without their work, we wouldn't have had a bill, and without their commitment to seeing this through, we wouldn't have gotten to where we are.

I want to thank Senators GRASSLEY, CRAPO, ROBERTS, ENZI, CORNYN, THUNE, BURR, ISAKSON, PORTMAN, TOOMEY, HELLER, SCOTT, and CASSIDY for the months of work they put into producing and passing this legislation. I also need to thank their staffs who, until this week, haven't slept in months.

My thanks also go to the tax staffers on the committee, namely, Chris Allen, Joseph Boddicker, Chris Conlin, Shay Hawkins, Randy Herndon, Bart Massey, Monica McGuire, Mike Quicke, Zachary Rudisill, Andrew Siracuse, Robert Sneeden, Derek Theurer, and Mark Warren.

My thanks go, as well, to the committee's legislative directors: Charles Cogar, Ken Flanz, Chris Gillott, Brad Grantz, Amber Kirchhoefer, Kurt Kovarik, Jessica McBride, Sarah Paul, Landon Stropko, Jay Sulzmann, Stephen Tausend, Pam Thiessen, and Christopher Toppings.

Of course, when the Democrats signaled their refusal to even meet on tax reform, we knew we would need a well-crafted budget resolution with the right instruction to get tax reform passed. So I need to thank my good friend, Chairman ENZI, and the Budget Committee for their work, which made a seemingly mundane and tedious process look easy.

From the Budget Committee staff, I want to thank Joe Brenckle, Jim Neill, Betsy McDonnell, Matt Giroux, Paul Vinovich, Becky Cole, Eric Ueland, Steve Townsend, Jeremy Dalrymple, and Thomas Fueller.

Once we had a resolution, we had to hold a markup. In the Finance Committee, that can be a challenging process, particularly on a bill this big and complex.

Thankfully, we have been ably served by a professional staff who helped us through that whole process, namely, Joshua Levasseur, Jewel Harper, Joe Carnucci, Mark Blair, Athena Schritz, Susanna Segal, Eliza Smith, Tim Corley, and Michael Pinkerton.

The Joint Committee on Taxation was also critical throughout the committee process, as well as when we moved the bill onto the floor. They worked countless hours doing the work that often just made everybody mad at one point or another. Theirs is an often thankless but really critical job, and I am grateful for their dedication and earnestness.

Specifically, I need to thank Tom Barthold and his team for making sure both parties in the House and the Senate were getting all the information that was needed, at times under challenging time constraints. Tom does a

terrific job for the Senate, and I personally appreciate him and value him as a friend.

After moving a mark through the committee, we relied on assistance from the Senate Legislative Counsel's office to put together the legislative text. That was a critical step, and we could not have done it without Mark McGunagle, Jim Fransen, and their team.

Then as we began to prep the bill for the floor, we spent countless hours debating different provisions before the Parliamentarian. This process can be difficult, and I would like to offer my thanks to our Parliamentarian, Elizabeth MacDonough, and her team for the hours and days they put into helping us comply with the rules of the Senate.

As the bill neared its final phase, we were grateful to be able to work with Senator MURKOWSKI on the second title of the bill, and as we moved to conference committee, Senator MURKOWSKI's counterparts in the House also played an instrumental role in helping to finalize this legislation.

Of course, there are those who work hard to make sure things go smoothly here on the floor. I thank the majority floor staff for their assistance, particularly, Laura Dove, Robert Duncan, and Megan Mercer.

As I said, this has been a long process, and throughout this entire venture, I have had the benefit of working with a skilled and committed staff. My staff have sacrificed time, energy, sleep, and, in some cases, likely their physical and mental health for the passage of this bill. It has been an incredible effort, and I need to thank all of them.

I want to single out my chief tax counsel, Mark Prater. I think everyone in this Chamber and everyone in Washington would agree that we could not have done any of this without Mark.

I also need to thank my staff director, Jay Khosla, who has been the tip of the spear, managing the incoming and outgoing issues with apparent ease. I also want to thank his assistant, Jason Stegmaier, for helping to keep Jay from forgetting the important details, like remembering to eat lunch.

I want to thank my entire tax staff: Jennifer Acuna, Tony Coughlan, Christopher Hanna, Alex Monie, Eric Oman, Marty Pippins, Preston Rutledge, and Nick Wyatt.

I need to thank the members of my senior team as well: Matt Hoffmann, Jeff Wrase, Julia Lawless, Jennifer Kuskowski, Chris Armstrong, Bryan Hickman, and Shane Warren.

I want to thank my communications staff on the committee: Katie Niederee, Nicole Hager, and Joshua Blume.

I also want to thank a couple of former Finance Committee staff members, specifically, Chris Campbell, my former staff director, who helped to set the stage for this entire effort, and Jim Lyons, my tax counsel who passed

away last year, much to the sorrow of us. He spent years working on tax reform, and I know we all wish he could have been here to celebrate with us this week.

From my personal office staff, I want to thank my legislative assistant, James Williams, and Matt Sandgren, my chief of staff.

There are many more people who deserve thanks this week—far too many to mention at this time. They are not forgotten, though, believe me.

We have done a good thing here this week. This is truly a historic success.

Some of our colleagues on the other side last night said that the American people will remember what happened here this week. To that, all I can say is that I hope they do. This new tax law will do a lot of good for a great number of people throughout our country, and I am humbled to have been a part of the efforts of so many people who were willing to get this thing done for the American people.

I am grateful to my staff. I am grateful to the staffs of our Senators on the committee. I am grateful for everyone involved in the Finance Committee and for the good efforts that they put forward. But I am really grateful that I serve in the U.S. Senate, the greatest deliberative body in the world, and this is a perfect illustration of why.

I am very grateful to be able to stand on this floor and show my complete devotion to this wonderful government. To both sides of the floor—Democrats and Republicans alike—I am grateful. I am grateful that we have this Constitution to guide us, and I am grateful that for the most part, we have abided by it.

With that, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oklahoma.

NOMINATIONS PROCESS

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, maybe my colleagues have heard through public and private conversations over the past year that I believe the Senate is moving gridlock from here on Capitol Hill to all across the city and across the Nation. The reason for that is how we do nominations and the length of time on nominations. It is time for the Senate to fix the Senate's rules.

Here is how it works. As this body knows extremely well, we have over 1,000 nominees who come from the President. In the first year of a new Presidency, a vast amount of time is spent in getting those 1,000 people through the nomination process. Each one of those is selected by the White House. They do their own vetting, and then they send them over to the Senate.

The Senate has the constitutional responsibility for advice and consent. When they come through the Senate, they will go through background checks, evaluations, and conversations with staff on both sides of the aisle.

They then come to the committee, go through a committee process and a hearing, they are voted on in that time period, and then they move to the floor.

When they move to the floor for debate, typically, for most of the years of the Senate, they have already gone through the committee process. Every Member of the Senate has the opportunity to be able to take a look at their information. And then they move through with a simple-majority vote. That is the way nominations have moved for most of the history of the Senate.

A few years ago—20 or so—some individual Senators started asking for cloture votes. Those cloture votes started to slow down the process on about 3 or 4 nominations a year; then it became 9 or so nominations a year; then it moved to as crazy of a number as 13 or so a year, of the 1,000 or so moving through.

That became such a nuisance that in 2013, my Democratic colleagues called for something they called the nuclear option, to say we will just take nominations not from 60 required to be able to get to cloture but just to 51. There was debate and internal conversation about that because Republicans, quite frankly, were holding up 15 or so nominations a year with the cloture process. So there was a big debate about that.

In the beginning of President Obama's second term, Republicans and Democrats came together and they changed the rules of the Senate for 2 years and said: OK, truce. The simple rule of the Senate was for any cloture vote, if there was one called for—again, typically, you would never call for one, but if there was one called for, there would be 2 hours of debate for a district court judge, 8 hours of debate for most nominees, and 30 hours of debate for Supreme Court, circuit court, or a Cabinet-level appointment. But even Harry Reid, when he stood on the floor, said this would be only—his words—"extraordinary circumstances" if you should ask for a cloture vote at all. But if they were asked for, it would be 2 hours, 8 hours, or 30 hours. Prior to that, all nominations were 30 hours of debate, literally taking up an entire day to move one person, knowing that you have to move 1,000.

A few months after that, still in 2013, Democrats still frustrated that Republicans were calling for some cloture votes still, moved to have the nuclear option entirely and just transition all nominations, except for the Supreme Court, to just 51 votes. So now they had the rule of expediting 2 hours, 8 hours, and 30 hours, and the new ability to move them all with just 51 votes.

Quite frankly, if you are going to change the rule to 51 votes, you probably need to change the cloture rule as well. They just did it in reverse. They changed the rule for how many hours it would take and then later changed the rule for how many people it takes to go through the process.