

do it right now, and they are doing it because of the tax relief legislation.

So to those who say: Gosh. What about me? I would just say: Look at your paycheck. If you work for one of these businesses that has already made an announcement, of course, you are feeling good about it, but even if you work for another company that maybe is a little quieter about what they are doing—maybe they are not going to make a big announcement—trust me, it is going to be in their interest now, in a competitive market out there, to invest in those companies, to invest in their people, to invest in training, to invest in better equipment, better technology. Those are the sorts of things that, over time, are going to make the biggest difference, I think, in this tax bill.

If you look at what is happening in our economy today, the reason wages are flat—by the way, expenses are not flat. Expenses are up and wages are flat. That is called the middle-class squeeze, and that is very real. What is the biggest expense? For most people, it is healthcare.

The way to deal with that is to get this economy moving and, specifically, to increase the productivity. That is what the economists say; that our productivity is low right now. When you have low productivity, you have low economic growth, and that is what we have had, under 2 percent economic growth. That is not the America I grew up in, and that is not the America I want my kids to grow up in.

By making these investments in better technology, in better equipment, in better training, what happens? You get better productivity, you get higher efficiency, you get the opportunity to increase your business, and therefore hire more people. That is something, I think, over time, will play out and will create the opportunity to lift up everybody.

John F. Kennedy was a Democrat, but he had a lot of things to say that sounded more like what Republicans are talking about today. One thing he said was that “a rising tide lifts all boats.” In the 1960s, he did cut capital gains, by the way, and that tax cut actually generated more economic activity.

Ronald Reagan, in 1986, actually put in place tax reform, with a bipartisan group here in the Congress, that ended up with strong economic growth in the 1980s and the 1990s, but that was 31 years ago. That is the last time we made these kinds of substantive comprehensive changes in the Tax Code. It is past time to do it again.

The final thing I will say about the tax reform proposal is that when you talk to businesses that are competing globally, which is more and more companies, including a lot of smaller companies now, the global economy is upon us. Some people said: Gosh, I wonder when the economy is going to affect me globally? Well, it does. It affects all of us. In your town, wherever it is, and in

your business, wherever you work, you are probably competing directly or indirectly on a global basis.

I will give you an example. There is a little company in my hometown called Standard Textiles. It is a great company. They make linens. It is a company that competes every day globally. In fact, a lot of the companies they compete with, as you can imagine, are companies that make these linens somewhere else—say, in Asia, where traditionally people have been able to find lower costs. Guess what they are looking at now with this tax reform bill: the ability to invest more here in America—American workers, American-made linens. They tell me, as do other companies, that this is going to give them a better competitive situation because no longer are you going to have a tax code that has the highest business rate in the entire industrialized world and an international system that says: If you keep your money overseas rather than bringing it back, when you earn money, you can save on your taxes. That is what resulted in \$2.5 to \$3 trillion being locked out of America and kept overseas.

This tax reform proposal unlocks that. It allows us to bring that money back. People call it repatriation. I guess that is accurate—repatriation. I wish it had never been “unpatriated” in the first place. If you are a patriot, you should want that money to be spent here in America. That is what is going to happen with this tax reform proposal.

It is about the tax cuts for working families—hard-working families who deserve it, who are now stuck in a situation where it is tough to get ahead. This will help immediately.

It is about helping small businesses and other companies here in America to be able to invest more, to be able to write off equipment right away when they buy it, and, as an example, having a lower rate.

It is also about leveling that playing field and saying that America, once again, is going to reposition itself as the leader in the world. Once again, it will be that beacon of opportunity that other countries look to and say: We would like to be like that—a free market economy where people who work hard and play by the rules can get ahead.

You can't say that now with our current Tax Code because workers literally are competing on an unlevel playing field with one hand tied behind their back because of our Tax Code. Three times as many American companies were purchased by foreign companies last year as the other way around. Because of our Tax Code, 4,700 U.S. companies became foreign companies over the last decade or so. That is based on an Ernst & Young study that came out recently that said, if this tax reform proposal we have now passed had been in place, those 4,700 companies would still be American companies.

All of us are patriots here in this body. All of us should want to bring back those jobs to America, repatriate those profits here to America, and give American workers the ability to compete on a level playing field.

I know there were some differences in this legislation. We heard a lot of it from the other side of the aisle, but on this issue, it has been bipartisan in the past. I hope it will be bipartisan going forward to hold these reforms in place so we can show that we have confidence and faith in American workers and that we have confidence that if we give them the right tools—in this case, the right Tax Code to work with—they can compete and they can win. I think we are going to see that.

I think, again, with the hopeful signs we are seeing, even today, of companies providing better pay or benefits or making additional commitments on investments. Even well beyond that, we are going to see, maybe quietly, that it will spread out all over the country in ways that will not be as obvious—in decisions that are going to be made, business budgets that are going to change as a result of this tax reform bill. I am hearing it from small businesses. I am hearing it from the bigger companies that compete directly globally, and I am certainly hearing it from families who are happy to see a little tax break to be able to help them as we go into the holidays.

That is all good news, and I think passing that legislation is really going to help the people I represent.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I also wish to talk about something tonight that was not accomplished. It was not accomplished in this vote we just had, which was the continuing resolution that keeps the government funded until January.

Some of us pushed hard to include various things in this legislation. I understand that some of these items are controversial, and it was hard to get it done because you needed 60 votes tonight. You needed a bipartisan consensus on how to move forward and not shut down the government.

I am not a fan of government shutdowns. They don't work. They are inefficient. They cost the taxpayer more at the end of the day, and they cause a lot of pain in the process.

We had the opportunity to pass certain things tonight that were not controversial. I don't understand why we didn't do it. Some issues, I understand on the spending front, were more controversial. I understand some issues were more controversial in terms of how you deal with the immigration issue. The DACA issue is one that I support resolving. I think we should codify it and resolve that. There were different points of view. People wanted to add different things there.

Let me tell you about one where I don't think there was any disagreement. If we could have passed it tonight, it would have provided a lot of certainty and predictability to families in Ohio and around the country. It is one that passed my committee, the Finance Committee, by a strong vote—not a bipartisan vote but a unanimous vote. That is the Children's Health Insurance Program, or the CHIP program. We passed it with a unanimous vote out of committee.

People say: Well, we need to find pay-fors for it. It is about \$8 billion to do what we did, which is a 5-year extension of the program, providing certainty and predictability to families who tonight are wondering what is going to happen to this program. Are my kids going to have the kind of quality healthcare they can access through the Children's Health Program, or the CHIP program?

There are some pay-fors out there that are, again, bipartisan. A big one, which would cover nearly half of that cost, is one where you simply ensure that the Medicaid Program has more integrity. So if a third-party payer is paying, the Medicaid Program doesn't pay for it. It is a bipartisan issue, and there is an initiative we looked at for this program and could have used.

I don't get this notion that we couldn't pass it because we couldn't find the pay-fors. The pay-fors were there. I don't get it that this was controversial, because it is not. I believe that on both sides of the aisle, we wanted to resolve the Children's Health Insurance Program.

Again, with all the other issues, I understand. It is tough when you have to get to 60 votes and get this passed in order to keep the government operating, which is not a situation we should be in, but we are in. I must tell you, I am very disappointed we were not able to deal with this one issue tonight that has not been controversial and that came out of the committee with a unanimous vote—not bipartisan but unanimous.

CHIP now helps 219,000 Ohio children get the health coverage they need and 9 million children nationwide. Ohio has the tenth largest program, and CHIP has been a leading cause in driving the insurance rate down for Ohio kids. In the case of my home State, we have seen our CHIP funding being questioned because the program was authorized until the end of September. Now it is no longer authorized. We are not sure exactly how much money we have left. We think we have enough to get into February in Ohio. Some States are worried about even getting into January.

Tonight, there was a short-term extension that, as I understand it, will take the program into February, but again, it doesn't provide that long-term certainty that families are looking for.

I must tell you that I am disappointed from what I hear about the

reasons, because I asked on both sides of the aisle, and one reason I got—again, this was leadership on both sides of the aisle—is that we can't do it unless we do other things with it. It is called CHIP—Children's Health Insurance Program—but it shouldn't be a political chip. It should be taken out of politics. It should be something that we deal with separately.

I will just tell you that using it as leverage for other programs is not the way I am going to look at it and not the way we should look at it. We should have passed it tonight. We should have passed it to help protect some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Funding should be a top priority, regardless of your partisan position and regardless of the political climate. It should be out of the political fray.

I urge my colleagues, when we come back after the first of the year, let's make that a priority. Let's bring it to the floor. Let's have a vote. Let's keep it bipartisan. Maybe, it could even be unanimous. Let's give those families in Ohio—the 219,000 kids who depend on it—and the millions of families around this country the peace of mind to know that we are extending this program.

Let's do that 5-year extension, that 5-year authorization we already passed in committee. Let's take it out of this political process and put it where it belongs, which is an issue that every single Member of this body should want to address for the kids they represent.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight on the tax reform and tax cut legislation. I do think it will provide the opportunity for everybody I represent to have a better future and a brighter future.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk on the Children's Health Insurance Program.

SIGNING AUTHORITY

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the junior Senator from Louisiana be authorized to sign duly enrolled bills during today's session of the Senate.

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

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I yield back my time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KENNEDY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATIONS REMAINING IN STATUS QUO

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that the list at the desk of

nominations received during the 115th Congress, first session, remain in status quo, notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXXI.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 525, 526, 528, and 530.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Kenneth J. Braithwaite, of Pennsylvania, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Norway; M. Lee McClenney, of Washington, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Paraguay; Brock D. Bierman, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development; and Christopher Ashley Ford, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (International Security and Non-Proliferation).

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Braithwaite, McClenney, Bierman, and Ford nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 311.

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

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert P. Storch, of the District of Columbia, to