

brave Ohioans who were tragically killed while serving their community and all of us.

On Saturday, February 10, Ohio lost two of its finest when Westerville Police Officers Anthony Morelli and Eric Joering were fatally shot responding to a 9-1-1 call. They rushed to the scene. When they arrived, they were under fire. Officer Joering was killed at the scene. Officer Morelli died in surgery later that day.

Officer Morelli was a 29-year veteran of the Westerville Police Department. He leaves behind his wife Linda, their daughter Beth, and son Chris. Officer Joering was a 16-year veteran of the Westerville Police Department, where he was a K-9 officer partnered with his dog Sam.

Eric loved working with Sam, but what he really loved were his kids and his wife. His most important job, he said, was being a husband and a father. He is survived by his wife Jami and his beautiful daughters Eva, Elena, and Ella.

Both men were loved and respected members of the Westerville community, and both will be sorely missed. I had a chance to talk to a number of their fellow officers, their colleagues, over the weekend and heard many stories about them, their bravery, and their commitment to service.

I also had the great honor to meet with the families of both of these fallen officers over this past weekend in Columbus, OH. Linda Morelli and Jami Joering are incredibly strong women and incredibly strong mothers. I expressed my thanks from all Ohioans for their husbands' service. I also had a chance to talk to four of the five children about their fathers' exemplary service; that they had fallen in service to all of us and how much we appreciated them.

The U.S. Capitol has flags that are flown for special occasions, and two flags were flown in honor of the sacrifices these two good men made protecting the people of Ohio.

Throughout this tragic situation, I will say the people of Central Ohio and, frankly, across the Nation have stepped up in big ways to support and assist these two families. I am encouraged by the kindness and generosity we have seen.

I want to take a moment to just say that these two brave officers, Tony Morelli and Eric Joering, were the best. They made the ultimate sacrifice for all of us. Today, we hold their families up in prayer.

(The remarks of Mr. PORTMAN pertaining to the introduction of S. 2456 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. PORTMAN. I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

#### TAX REFORM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, tax reform is working. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act has been the law of the land

for just 2 months, but it is already helping American workers.

When it came time to draft tax reform legislation, we had one objective, and that was to make hard-working Americans' lives better. To accomplish that, we focused on two important priorities.

First, we focused on immediately increasing Americans' take-home pay. We lowered tax rates across the board, we nearly doubled the standard deduction, and we doubled the child tax credit. All of those provisions went into effect on January 1, and by the end of this month, according to the IRS, 90 percent of the American people should see lower paychecks.

While immediate relief for hard-working Americans was crucial, we wanted more than that. We wanted to give the American people access to the kinds of jobs and the kinds of wages and opportunities that would set them up for long-term security. We wanted to give them the kinds of jobs and wages where they wouldn't be forced to choose between sending their kids to college and saving for a secure retirement or between paying the mortgage or medical bills. So in addition to lowering the tax burden on Americans directly, we set about improving the playing field for American businesses so that we could make things better for American workers.

Needless to say, in order for American workers to thrive, the American economy has to thrive, and that means that American businesses have to thrive. It is pretty hard for a small business to hire a new worker or to raise wages if the owner can barely pay the tax bill. It is unlikely that an American company is going to have a lot of spare cash for investing in its workforce if it is struggling to compete with foreign companies that are paying far less in taxes. It is unlikely that America's global companies are going to focus on reinvesting in the United States if they face a tax penalty for bringing foreign earnings back home. So we lowered our Nation's massive corporate tax rate, which, up until January 1, was the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world. We lowered tax rates across the board for owners of small- and medium-sized businesses, farms, and ranches. We expanded business owners' ability to recover investments they make in their businesses, which will free up cash that they can reinvest into their operations and their workers. We brought the U.S. international tax system into the 21st century by replacing our outdated worldwide system with a modernized territorial tax system so that American businesses are not operating at a disadvantage next to their foreign competitors.

The goal in all of this was to free up businesses to increase their investments in the American economy and in American workers, and that is exactly what businesses are doing. The list of tax reform good news keeps growing—

wage increases, new jobs, increased investment, bonuses, benefit increases, and the list goes on and on.

Take utility bills. Lower utility bills might not be the first result we think of from tax reform, but tax reform is saving utility companies money, and they are passing those savings on to consumers.

Washington, DC, radio station WTOP reports:

In a flip-flop related to tax reform, [utility company] Pepco now says it wants to cut rates instead of raise them.

In December and January, the utility announced plans to raise rates in D.C. and Maryland respectively. . . . But the sweeping Federal tax bill signed into law late last year meant a significant tax savings for the utility. As a result, Pepco is now asking the Maryland Public Service Commission to approve a rate cut.

That is right—they were talking about a rate increase, but now they are talking about a rate cut in their utility rates.

Take this story from the Daily Energy Insider titled "Federal Tax Cut More Than Reverses Eversource Rate Increase in Massachusetts."

The Daily Energy Insider:

Many Eversource Energy electricity customers in Massachusetts who were expecting to see a rate increase this year instead will see a rate reduction because of the recent Federal corporate tax cut.

"What was expected to be about a \$36 million annual rate increase has turned into a \$20 million annual decrease," said the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities.

In my home State of South Dakota, Black Hills Energy in Rapid City is working with regulators to pass tax savings on to South Dakotans. So far, utility companies in at least 39 States are passing tax savings on to consumers, and that can be a real help to family budgets. Everybody knows how much gets spent out of every family's budget on utilities, on energy, and certainly in my part of the country in South Dakota, with the cold winters, that is even amplified. It can be a real help to family budgets, particularly families who are living paycheck to paycheck.

In Florida, Florida Power and Light Company announced that thanks to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, it will no longer require its customers to pay a surcharge for Hurricane Irma restoration. Instead, the company reports:

Florida Power and Light plans to apply federal tax savings toward the \$1.3 billion cost of Hurricane Irma restoration, which will save each of Florida Power and Light's 4.9 million customers an average of approximately \$250.

Thanks to tax reform, good news for American workers seems to just pour in daily, whether it is lower utility bills, new jobs, bonuses, or, as Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina announced last week, lower rate increases on health insurance.

I am proud that tax reform is accomplishing our goal of making life better for hard-working Americans, and I look forward to seeing even more benefits for American workers in the weeks and months to come.

I yield the floor.

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

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

#### NOMINATIONS OF RYAN NELSON AND SUSAN COMBS

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, as chairman of the Senate Western Caucus and as a Montanan, I am here to urge the swift confirmation of two outstanding nominations to serve in the Department of the Interior. The first is Ryan Nelson, a native of Idaho Falls, ID, as Solicitor of the Department of the Interior. The second is Susan Combs, a rancher from Big Bend, TX. She is nominated to be Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget.

Both of these positions are critical to managing our public lands and wildlife. Yet these two well-qualified individuals have been waiting in a bureaucratic limbo. Mr. Nelson was first nominated over 209 days ago, and Ms. Combs received her first nomination over 231 days ago.

Mr. Nelson is a great choice to serve as Solicitor. He is a westerner, and he spends time fishing and hunting with his family in Idaho. He understands our western way of life, and he has the work experience to make sure our public lands are managed and protected in the right way.

His service includes serving as clerk on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, serving as special counsel for the Senate Committee on the Judiciary and as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the Department of Justice.

At the Department of Justice, he worked to defend vital Federal programs and oversaw many complex cases involving our natural resources, wildlife, and environment. He also compelled polluters to limit harmful emissions into the air and worked with then-Solicitor of the Department of the Interior David Bernhardt on the listing decision for the polar bear. Like Mr. Bernhardt, Ryan is capable of upholding the law and the science, even when it is not easy.

If you want someone who values conservation, who knows the appropriate use of laws, like the Antiquities Act and the Endangered Species Act, then Ryan is your guy. The Department of the Interior needs Ryan's expertise to help make the best decisions possible for the benefit of our natural resources and the people and wildlife living around them. His confirmation must be prioritized.

Ms. Combs is also exactly the right person for the job to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Manage-

ment and Budget. Ms. Combs has had a long and successful career both in business and in public service, including as a member of the Texas House of Representatives, as Texas's agriculture commissioner, and as Texas's comptroller of public accounts. Her proven management track record in public service and in business is crucial to making the Department of the Interior more efficient and effective to help ensure the responsible stewardship of western lands.

Both Mr. Nelson's and Ms. Combs's nominations have been pending longer than any of their predecessors—now listen to this—over the past 25 years. This is not just bad governance; it is a complete lack of governance. Here is the problem. When you have qualified individuals like Mr. Nelson and like Ms. Combs who wait in this bureaucratic limbo for this long, it then puts them in a position to, maybe, find other employment. We need to find the best people who are willing to serve in these positions, and we need to give them the respect of moving them through quickly so that we can keep them with the thought of entering public service.

Colleagues, it is time to get the job done and move these critical nominations across the finish line.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

#### GUN SAFETY

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, this morning, I had the opportunity to meet with some extraordinary young people. These were students from Parkland, FL, who attend the school where the mass shooting took place 2 weeks ago. What was amazingly impressive about these young people is that in the midst of their grief, in the midst of the unbelievably traumatic experience that they went through in seeing their best friends being shot and wounded in cold blood and their teachers killed, they resolved not just to mourn and grieve for their friends and neighbors; they resolved to stand up and fight back and come to Washington, go to Tallahassee, FL, and go around the country to do everything they can to make certain that no more children—no more young people—are mowed down and slaughtered in schools.

Nobody thinks that the issue of gun safety is going to be an easy issue to solve. There are literally hundreds of millions of guns throughout this country, and there are 5 million assault weapons throughout this country today. Tragically, there are many thousands of people, I expect in every State in this country, who are walking our streets and are at their wits end emotionally, who are suicidal, who are homicidal. Many of those people have access to guns and guns of mass destruction. I think that in some respects, the slaughter at the high school in Parkland, FL, was kind of the straw that broke the camel's back.

Several months ago, the American people were stunned to see some very

sick person in Las Vegas break a window and start mowing down people. He killed some 58 Americans and wounded 500 people within a period of a few minutes. That was on top of Sandy Hook. It was on top of so many gun slaughters that, I think, what has finally happened—maybe because of the extraordinary efforts of these young people from Parkland—the American people are saying that enough is enough, that we have a difficult problem. We may not be able to solve it completely overnight, but we have a moral obligation to do everything we can to make certain that no more children—no more people in this country—are mowed down by some sick person with a weapon.

That is not just I who is talking, and it is not just the young people from the high school in Florida. It is pretty much what the American people want. Let me refer the Presiding Officer to a few polls that were conducted fairly recently.

A Quinnipiac poll was done on February 20, just a week ago. This is what that poll showed.

It showed that 97 percent of the American people support universal background checks, which is not a radical idea. What the American people are saying and what gun owners are saying is that we should keep guns out of the hands of people who are not responsible and should not own guns. Universal background checks are almost universally supported by the American people.

In that same Quinnipiac poll, 83 percent of the American people indicated support for a mandatory waiting period for all gun purchases. You don't want somebody who is angry, who is upset, or who had something terrible happen to go running to a gun store, buying a gun, and then going out and using it.

There are 75 percent who, basically, want the Congress to address the issue of gun violence and to start taking action.

There are 67 percent of the people polled by Quinnipiac who support a nationwide ban on the sale of assault weapons. They believe and I believe that assault weapons are designed as military weapons to kill human beings. That is what those weapons are designed to do. I believe and have believed for 30 years—and a majority of the American people believe—that we should end the sale and distribution of those weapons. That was in a Quinnipiac poll.

According to a CNN poll that was done more recently, just a few days ago on February 25, 70 percent of the American people want stricter gun laws. This is the highest number that CNN has registered since way back when the Brady Bill passed, in 1993.

According to CNN, 87 percent support laws to prevent convicted felons and the mentally ill from owning guns. There are 71 percent who support banning anyone under the age of 21 from buying a gun. There are 63 percent who