

approach to uncovering where the money is going and how these ill-gotten gains are being spent. Remaining passive and waiting, is not going to deter, disrupt, and finally defeat these deliberate Russian efforts to undermine our basic institutions.

I will continue to work with my colleagues on the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, the Armed Services Committee, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and others to ensure that our national security apparatus has the requisite authorities.

What we need now is initiative by the administration to fully resource and to direct a comprehensive approach to detect, disrupt, and prevent this Russian interference. We need to put the appropriate resources against this threat. The heart of our democracy—our election process—was attacked by the Russians. As we learned yesterday from Admiral Rogers of Cyber Command, it is under attack as we speak today, and we can expect the attacks against the 2018 election cycle to increase with both frequency, boldness, and, unfortunately, effectiveness if we remain passive—indeed, paralyzed—as we are today. We have to recognize that the money that is being generated through these malign financial activities is being used not only to enrich Putin and his cronies but is being used to attack the United States very effectively. Putin has exploited our own laws that favor financial secrecy and has used clandestine tactics to his advantage at a relatively inexpensive cost.

Increasing, for example, resources to FinCEN in the Treasury Department or standing up and funding a task force, as I described, and devoting the necessary resources to tracing shell companies back to the people responsible would be a small fraction of what it would cost to use conventional forces to deter Russian aggression. Indeed, deploying a combat team to the Baltics is more expensive, I would suspect, than setting up a team of experts here in Washington that will go after these funding streams, and without the money, they cannot conduct their operations.

Mr. President, we often hear the expression “follow the money” as a way to identify the cause of a problem, and that is true here. Today, we know that our democracy and many others are under attack by the Government of Russia. Responding to this reality will require a comprehensive strategy to counter Russian asymmetric and hybrid tactics. However, as I laid out, an immediate step we can take is a concerted effort to bring greater transparency to our financial system. If we fail to do so, we will continue to have that very secrecy used against our national security interests and the interests of all of our allies.

Now is the time to act. We are being attacked. To sit back and absorb the punches will lead only to defeat, not to a final victory over our adversaries.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Russell Vought, of Virginia, to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

TRIBUTE TO SALLY-ANN ROBERTS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, it is very hard, as the Presiding Officer knows, to become an icon in television news as station owners change, as demographics change, and as on-air personalities change. The “Guinness Book of World Records” actually tracks the longest serving television news broadcaster. In case one is curious, the current record holder is a broadcasting legend named Don Alhart, who has been delivering the news in Rochester, NY, for 51 years. I am happy for Mr. Alhart, but Sally-Ann Roberts could have taken that title from him had she not decided it was time to pass the baton.

After 41 years at WWL-TV Channel 4, in the great city of New Orleans, Sally-Ann Roberts is embarking on a new chapter in her life. She is retiring today. If anybody is worthy of icon status, it is Sally-Ann, and she is absolutely humble about it. If you talk to her about her career, she will probably turn the conversation around to you. If you insist on talking about her career, she will always give credit to her parents for instilling such a strong work ethic and a love for the Lord in their children.

Ms. Roberts came to WWL-TV from Laurel, MS. She was working as the weekend anchor in that small, wonderful town. She didn't even work every weekend; she worked every other weekend. Talent, though, does not stay hidden in America. A WWL-TV journalist by the name of Angela Hill, an icon in her own right, stopped near Laurel for the night. She turned on the television, saw Sally-Ann, and immediately told her news director to hire Sally-Ann. Angela recognized intelligence and talent when she saw it. Very shortly thereafter, Ms. Sally-Ann Roberts had the city hall beat in New Orleans, and the rest, they say, is history.

For the past 26 years, Sally-Ann has anchored the morning show on WWL-TV Channel 4 in New Orleans. She is as much a part of the morning routine in

New Orleans as eggs and beignets. Part of the reason people feel so comfortable with Sally-Ann is her positive attitude and pleasing personality. During cooking segments, she has been known to sneak bites of the crispiest bacon. During stories about neglected children—stories that would break anyone's heart—she would often tell us that she was shedding light on the need for foster parents, always trying to be positive.

The Presiding Officer probably knows Ms. Sally-Ann Roberts's little sister. Her name happens to be Ms. Robin Roberts. Robin is an anchor on “Good Morning America.” A few years ago, Robin was diagnosed with a very rare blood disorder. A bone marrow transplant saved Robin Roberts's life. Sally-Ann Roberts provided that lifesaving bone marrow. Here is a typical story about Sally-Ann. She went through the bone marrow collection process on a Tuesday and a Wednesday. By Thursday, she was dressed to the nines and doing a national interview to emphasize how quick the recovery time is. She wanted to educate America about bone marrow donation.

Let me say again that Sally-Ann Roberts is an icon, and I don't use that word lightly. If she had wanted, she would have probably been anchoring the evening news before a national audience, but she loved and still loves New Orleans, and that was where she chose to remain.

She has had an extraordinary career as a broadcast journalist. I know she is excited about what comes next. I suspect she will spend some time with her grandchildren. I suspect she will continue writing books and also driving home the importance of bone marrow donation. Sally-Ann, I know, will not just put her feet up and sit. Audience members like me are grateful she devoted such a lengthy chapter of her life to Louisiana and to our great city of New Orleans.

God bless you, Sally-Ann Roberts. Thank you for giving so much to our community and to our State.

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

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

TAX REFORM

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I have been coming to the floor to talk about the many ways the tax relief law has helped people all across America.

Last week, there were even more examples. One thing we saw was the “Economic Report of the President” that came out last Wednesday. This is a report from the top economists at the White House. According to the report, the tax relief law that we have passed and signed into law is going to raise

the average wages for working families across this country by over \$4,000 in the long run. That is a huge raise. This report said that more than 4 million workers are also getting one-time cash bonuses and other benefits. These one-time cash bonuses mean a great deal to American families. It says that so far, over \$2 billion in cash bonuses have been given.

Today in Wyoming, we heard another great report that Taco John's—an establishment at which I frequently ate lunch when I was in the Wyoming Legislature, as did so many members of the Wyoming Legislature. They are providing bonuses for employees. That is another case in point. The reason they say they are doing it is the tax relief tax cut benefits that people all across the country are receiving as a result of the tax law we passed.

If you remember, a lot of Democrats predicted gloom and doom if we were to pass this piece of legislation. NANCY PELOSI actually said it was Armageddon. She said it was the end of the world. Well, with all of these workers getting bigger paychecks and more take-home pay, Democrats have now started to panic. NANCY PELOSI said all the benefits people are getting under the tax law are "crumbs." That is what she called them, but that is not what people across the State of Wyoming are calling them.

I received a note the other day from a man who said he heard all the rhetoric from NANCY PELOSI and the Democrats. He said: "Here is what the crumbs mean to a fellow working in Casper, Wyoming." He said that the first thing he noticed was that his take-home pay was higher in his latest paycheck. He figures that the tax cut works out to about a 2-percent raise for him. He and his wife decided to put that money straight into his retirement savings plan and invest it. He figures that over time, as those investments grow, it could add up to an extra \$97,000 by the time he is ready to retire. He said: "A few crumbs over time really do matter."

There was a second part of his story about what the Republican tax relief means for him and his family, and that is the bonus. Because of the tax cuts, his employer gave him a bonus of \$1,500. He said: "I plan to enjoy the summer just a little bit more with this surprise income." He said he is investing the tax cut in his retirement, and he is investing the bonus in creating additional memories with his family today. He said that it means they are going to take an extra camping trip to Yellowstone this summer. They will enjoy "a few more cookouts with families and friends this summer to savor the memories that this tax reform is providing."

That is what it means for people across the country—memories, family activities, vacation, and a better retirement—all of those things because of the tax law and tax relief passed for the American people. They are going to

do things they like doing, everything from going on vacation to going out for ice cream.

Tax reform has been very good for people in Casper, WY. It is good for his family. He wrote to tell me about it. It is good for the local businesses that he will be supporting, where he will be spending his money, traveling around the State, going on vacation, camping trips, cookouts, and making memories. They are not crumbs.

I don't know why Democrats who voted against the tax cuts even came to Washington in the first place. I do know that Republicans came here with a purpose—a purpose to give families more opportunities to invest in their futures like this man is doing.

There was another new survey that came out last week. They talked with heads of companies across America, and they talked about the confidence index that we are seeing nationwide. That is because of the tax relief law. The survey found that 89 percent of these business leaders are confident in the U.S. economy's prospects this year. It is at an alltime high.

Look at 2016—the last year of the Obama administration—and 2017 and 2018. That is an enormous jump from the 39 percent that business leaders were feeling in terms of confidence back in 2016. It is even bigger than last year, when 80 percent said they were confident. The reason for the jump is simple. When we look at what has changed since 2016, there were a couple of very big things.

First is the way that Republicans have been cutting back on Washington's burdensome, punishing, and destructive regulations. It is going to save Americans a lot of money and a lot of time.

The second thing that happened is that Republicans in Congress passed the tax relief law. That is why millions of Americans are getting a pay raise. That is why Americans are more confident about our economy. The business leaders are right. They should be confident about the state of America's economy because Republicans are just getting started.

Our economy should have been growing much more quickly ever since the recession ended almost 9 years ago, but it didn't during the last administration because the politics and the policies of the Democrats in Washington held our economy back. Now we have Republican policies, and the economy is much stronger. America's economy grew by just 1.8 percent in 2016. That is tepid growth compared to what we expect and what we are used to. Last year, it grew by 2.5 percent. We added 2.2 million jobs in 2017. Confidence is soaring.

Democrats don't want to hear about it. They don't want to talk about it. They don't want to hear from their constituents who are getting a raise and getting more money in their paychecks. They consider it crumbs. They almost appear to be rooting for the

economy to stall. Some may want the economy to look more like it did when they were in charge.

The American people are going to look at what the Democrats did and realize that what the Republicans did made a huge difference in their lives. People are going to look at the fact that every Democrat in the Senate voted against the tax cuts. Then people are going to look at what Republicans have done and what it means for people's take-home pay. That is why Republicans are here. It is what we promised to do. That is what we are going to continue to do.

ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. President, I would like to speak about energy infrastructure. President Trump has shown that he intends to be a champion for upgrading our country's aging highways, bridges, and water infrastructure. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, I will be working with President Trump to modernize our infrastructure. This includes working to upgrade America's energy infrastructure, things such as electric transmission lines and natural gas pipelines. These facilities need to be repaired and modernized, and we need to build new facilities as well.

Often, these investments can be made without any taxpayer funding. People get the benefit of new jobs, economic growth, and the affordable and reliable energy that these projects supply. It is good for everybody, including the taxpayers. We just need to make sure the government doesn't get in the way.

Recently, there was an important reminder of the need for energy infrastructure development. It was that blast of cold weather and heavy snow that hit the Northeast part of the country earlier this year. Normally, natural gas accounts for about 48 percent of the power generated in New England. During this big winter storm in January, gas accounted for only 16 percent. That is because there aren't enough natural gas pipelines in the region to deliver all of the gas they needed for heating and for power. This shouldn't happen in America, where we are the No. 1 natural gas producer in the world.

To meet the demand in New England, powerplants and utilities have had to take the drastic step of importing liquefied natural gas from Russia. Can you imagine such a thing? This is a tanker, and it carried gas from a Russian company called Yamal LNG—liquefied natural gas. The gas came from a facility in Siberia, and they were taking it right into the Boston Harbor last month. This is the location of the Boston Tea Party, and we are bringing in Russian LNG.

You might think that local leaders in the region would want to avoid importing gas from our adversaries, like Russia. You might think they would want more American pipelines to power our communities. That is not what is happening in the Northeast part of this