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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.

Almighty God, in whose hand lies the destiny of people and nations, empower our lawmakers to do Your will on Earth even as it is done in Heaven. Make their lives reflect gratitude for Your merciful kindness and loving providence. Lord, break the bonds of any excessive self-sufficiency by showing them what they can accomplish with Your supernatural strength. Help them to be blessings and not burdens as they live a life with the gifts of enthusiasm and expectancy. As they live at full potential according to Your expectations, use them to glorify Your Name on the Earth.

We pray in Your great 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). The majority leader is recognized.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, anyone who has read the news lately will have come across some pretty remarkable headlines about the state of the U.S. economy.

On Tuesday, Gallup announced that at the close of 2017, Americans' opti-

mism about the job market set a new record. The same day, the S&P 500 hit an all-time high. Last week, the New York Times ran a story about "a wave of optimism [that] has swept over American business leaders." This optimism, the reporters continued, "is beginning to translate into the sort of investments in new plants, equipment and factory upgrades that bolsters economic growth, spurs job creation—and may finally raise wages significantly"—raise wages significantly.

Markets are optimistic, manufacturers are optimistic, and workers are optimistic. Investment is ramping up, wages are growing, and unemployment is low. By all accounts, 2018 is off to a very bright start.

Of course, Washington is not the source of all this. The engine of American free enterprise is not here in the Nation's Capital, it is in the ingenuity, talent, and work ethic of workers and entrepreneurs all across our country.

Government does not create prosperity, the American people do, but the Federal Government can certainly get in the way. Draconian tax policy and runaway regulation make it more difficult for American workers to find jobs and get pay raises. It becomes harder to start new businesses, harder to expand and invest in existing businesses, and more tempting to send money and jobs overseas.

During the Obama years, that is precisely what happened. For 8 years, his administration seized every single opportunity it could find to increase taxes, pile on more regulations, and literally micromanage the lives of the American people. Many middle-class families, like the ones I represent in Kentucky, were drowning in all this.

Now all of that is changing. In 2017, a Republican President, Republican House, and Republican Senate brought back bedrock, free market principles: tax less, regulate less, micromanage less, and empower the American people to work hard and keep more of what

they earn. And we are already seeing results.

The most significant accomplishment was the historic tax reform law the President signed into law just over 3 weeks ago. It hadn't been done in 30 years, but in 2017 Congress and the White House worked together to overhaul the Tax Code. We cut rates for families and businesses, expanded key deductions, closed wasteful loopholes, and repealed ObamaCare's individual mandate tax. We took a lot of money out of Washington's pocket and put it back in the pockets of middle-class families, who, after all, earned it in the first place.

Earlier in the year, we made major progress in rolling back the tangled web of Obama-era redtape using the Congressional Review Act. Congress repealed 15 major Federal regulations that were literally stifling American enterprise. This alone is expected to save employers up to \$36 billion in compliance costs. This was in addition to the 860 obsolete rules the Trump administration revisited in 2017.

Small businesses and large companies are all benefitting from these victories, and so are their workers. Boeing has announced plans to invest \$100 million in developing its workforce and another \$100 million to enhance its facilities and its infrastructure. AT&T intends to invest a billion dollars in capital upgrades. Just this morning, Walmart announced it would raise starting wages for hourly associates, along with bonuses and an expansion of paid family leave. That is great news for more than 1 million people, including the nearly 30,000 people working at more than 100 Walmart stores across my home State of Kentucky. This is in addition to all of the other employers across the State who have already begun passing tax reform savings along to their employees.

What is true for nationwide employers is proving to be true on Main Streets across the country as well. In

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



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New Jersey a family-owned car dealership is giving each of its full-time employees a \$500 bonus and looking to create more jobs. In Florida, a family-owned cookie bakery is planning to immediately expense new equipment purchases, enabling them to develop specialized products and boost wages for their team. All told, more than 100 companies have announced intentions to deliver special bonuses, pay increases, or other benefits to employees as a result of tax reform. This in addition to the direct savings from tax cuts. Thanks to lower rates and bigger deductions, American workers will get to keep more of their paychecks.

These are just a few of the ways a growing economy can make life better for the American people. This is what happens when a Republican President and Republican majorities in Congress work to get Washington out of the way.

It is a shame that none of our Democratic colleagues in the House or the Senate—not one, not a single one—voted for tax reform—not a one. If they had their way, American businesses would not have had a 21st century tax code giving them a fairer fight with overseas competitors, American workers wouldn't have these bonuses and special benefits, and a typical family of four earning just over \$70,000 wouldn't be on track to keep \$2,000 more of their own money this year.

Fortunately, Republican majorities passed the bill anyway, and the American people are sure glad that we did.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, we are inching ever closer to the government's spending deadline of January 19, when we will have to address a host of unresolved issues. We must lift the spending caps equally for defense and other domestic priorities, such as opioids, veterans, pensions. We must pass an aid package to give relief to disaster stricken areas of our country. We must pass the healthcare package that extends CHIP—children's health insurance—and community health centers.

Just this week, the CBO projected that CHIP will actually save the government money if it is extended for 10 years. We could ensure that kids continue to get quality health insurance for longer and save the government money if we extend it for 10 years. That is a no-brainer.

Of course, we must settle the fate of the Dreamers. A deal to pass DACA protection alongside a package of border security measures is finally within reach. As the immigration meeting at the White House showed, almost everyone in this body is interested in passing DACA protections into law.

Democrats are interested in effective, practical border security measures. We want what secures the border the most, not what sounds the best, not what was a political slogan in a campaign but what actually protects our border as drugs flow in and other things come across. We are working as hard as we can to find an agreement both sides can live with. The only folks who didn't get the memo were some House Republicans who continue to push hard-line immigration bills that are outside the scope of the negotiations. I am referring to Representative GOODLATTE's proposal, which is entirely counterproductive and completely unacceptable.

If Speaker RYAN is going to listen to the hard right in the House and coalesce behind Representative GOODLATTE's proposal on DACA, we will have no deal. Let the American people hear that. If Speaker RYAN is unable to resist Representative GOODLATTE's proposal—he has never been for Dream to begin with—we will have no deal.

If Speaker RYAN bends to the hard-right faction of his caucus—which is far away from what most Americans think; the hard right doesn't like Dreamers, and 70 percent of Americans do—and if they ask for immigration measures outside the scope of our negotiations, then so will we. Deal with chain migration outside of the scope of Dreamers? Let's deal with the 11 million who need a path to citizenship—a tough but fair path. We can play that game too. We can go beyond the confines of this deal, which has been Dreamers and border security, and then the whole thing won't happen.

There are people on my side who aren't going to want to make any compromises. I know that. There are people on both sides who won't want to make any compromises. As responsible leaders, we have to come to an agreement, and we can't make everybody happy. That is why we have a House and Senate. That is why we have legislators.

The whole reason we narrowed the scope of our negotiations is so that we could accomplish something for the Dreamers, rather than relitigating comprehensive immigration reform in such a compressed timeframe.

This body passed a very fine bill, in my opinion. It was really tough on the border. It was tough on benefits. It was tough on a path to citizenship. For the first time, for instance, green card holders had to learn English. That was in our bill that passed this body—led by Senator MCCAIN and myself and the Gang of 8—68 to 32. The House didn't dare take it up for the same reason they seem to have trouble today: The

hard right said no immigration reform. And we are stuck. That hurts everybody.

I am sure my good friend is hearing from farmers in his State, as I hear from farmers in mine, and businesspeople. We have to tighten up our borders. We have to make sure we have a rational system of immigration. We can't assure that every person who wants to come here comes here. We all agree with that. But that is comprehensive immigration reform, because we also believe that the 11 million here should be given a difficult but fair path to citizenship. We can't start litigating all of that.

Some of my friends on the other side of the aisle say: I have to have this provision outside DACA and border security. They are hurting the cause of getting something done.

If we can reach an agreement by the end of this week or over the weekend, we can pass it into law as part of a global deal on the budget by next Friday. I believe that is still the best way to resolve the issue. I am hopeful we can get this done. Any later than that, we won't have time to do it by the 19th.

Let me assure my colleagues, accept the majority leader in good faith and the Speaker in good faith—their intention is to put a bill on the floor in February or March. We have heard that before, and it never happens. So we feel passionately that we should get this done—both tighten up the border and help the Dreamers. We have to do it as part of the must-pass bill, and that must-pass bill is this global spending deal.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now a word on the Russia investigation. Over the past weeks, several events have shaken my confidence that our Republican colleagues are committed to an independent investigation in Congress and at the FBI.

A rightwing smear campaign is being waged to discredit the investigation and the investigator. Absurd attacks have been launched on Special Counsel Mueller, one of the finest men that I think we have ever come across in this body. I remember when he was FBI Director; everyone loved him. He is a man of utmost integrity. A Republican Congressman went so far as to suggest his investigation was a "coup" when that Member spoke on the floor of the House.

Here in the Senate, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee—I have great respect for him; we are the only two Charles E's in the Senate—referred Christopher Steele to the FBI and recommended criminal charges, even though Mr. Steele was a whistleblower—something that our chairman of Judiciary has always protected. He came to the FBI with concerns that Donald Trump was subject to blackmail. Any American would worry about that. The chairman took that action