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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BEN SASSE, a Senator from the State of Nebraska.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we seek Your blessings this day for our lawmakers. You know their hearts, their motives, and their needs. Lord, provide for their needs out of the abundance of Your riches in glory. Remind them that unless You provide Your guidance, they labor in vain. So guide them in what they propose to accomplish so that they will reap a bountiful harvest. Hold them with Your mighty hand until doubts and fears subside.

We pray in Your wonderful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 13, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BEN SASSE, a Senator from the State of Nebraska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SASSE thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it has been less than 3 months since historic tax reform became law. It has been less than 3 months since we have cut taxes significantly for middle-class families by lowering rates and increasing the standard deduction, since we created new deductions to help small businesses keep more of what they earn and purchase new equipment more easily, and since we leveled the playing field for American producers by making our corporate tax rates more competitive—a measure that mainstream economists agree will boost future wages for workers.

There is a common theme here. Each part of this bill was built on the simple idea that American workers, job creators, and middle-class families know best what to do with their own hard-earned money, and they ought to be able to keep more of it. It is a defining philosophy on our side of the aisle.

Our Democratic friends don't seem to share that notion. The Democratic leader in the House called these historic tax cuts "probably one of the worst bills in the history of the United States of America."

In the Senate, my Democratic colleagues' predictions were equally dire. My friend the Democratic leader offered this assessment: "There is nothing about this bill that suits the needs of the American worker."

Tax reform used to be a shared, bipartisan priority—apparently, not anymore. Now our Democratic friends seem fully committed to the notion

that there is no problem Washington, DC, can't solve by raising taxes and imposing more regulations.

Just last week, my friend the Democratic leader made this clear. He announced that he wants to claw back tax reform and have Americans send more money to the IRS.

Here is his rationale: There are much better ways to use this money—much better ways to use this money than for people to keep more of their own money, apparently. The unspoken assumption is unmistakable: Democratic leaders know how to spend that money better than the citizens and employers. The government knows best.

Of course, just a few months in, we are getting a clear picture of which philosophy really works. The good news about tax reform keeps pouring in, and with every favorable story, my Democratic friends tie themselves in knots trying to convince everyone that new investments, new jobs, new raises and bonuses, and companies repatriating money back home are somehow not good news after all.

Even as billions of dollars are put toward raises, bonuses, and new worker benefits, it is nothing more than "crumbs." Even as billions more are invested in U.S. manufacturing and new jobs, they stick by their predictions of "Armageddon"—all of this, even as tax reform is achieving specific goals they spent years claiming to support.

Consider the issue of the minimum wage. Because of tax reform, Hormel Foods has raised starting pay to \$13, Wells Fargo has established a \$15 minimum wage, and Walmart has raised the starting wage for its associates. That is great, but, apparently, Senate Democrats have better uses for the money going forward than your raise.

Take the subject of family leave. Because of tax reform, including the family leave incentive championed by Senator FISCHER, huge national employers

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



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such as Starbucks and CVS are expanding paid family leave programs or creating new ones.

These new family leave programs are great, but I think Senate Democrats have other designs on the private dollars financing these programs. They have better uses in mind for the tax savings that are flowing to charities and nonprofits around the country, like the women's shelter in Washington State that is getting \$1 million toward a brand-new building.

Well, Republicans just don't see it that way. Rather than trying to regulate our way into prosperity through higher taxes and heavyhanded mandates, we believe in simply taking Washington's foot off the brake. Because we did, American free enterprise is creating the very pay raises and benefits that our Democratic colleagues insisted only government could provide.

My friends across the aisle may want to repeal the tax cuts that have generated these raises, bonuses, new jobs, new investments, minimum wage increases, and paid family leave expansions. They may want to raise taxes so badly that they are willing to shrink workers' paychecks and send jobs and investments back overseas. Fortunately, Republicans in Congress will not let that happen. We are standing with the American people.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGULATORY RELIEF, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2155, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2155) to promote economic growth, provide tailored regulatory relief, and enhance consumer protections, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell (for Crapo) modified amendment No. 2151, in the nature of a substitute.

Crapo amendment No. 2152 (to amendment No. 2151), of a perfecting nature.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on September 5 of last year, President Trump announced the repeal of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, known as DACA. As a result of that decision by President Trump, hundreds of thousands of immigrants who came to the United States as children, known as Dreamers, face losing their work permits and their right to stay in America without deportation. They are threatened with being returned to countries that many of them barely remember, if at all.

These Dreamers were brought here as children—infants, toddlers, young kids—by their parents to America, and they grew up here. They went to school in America, to our public schools and other schools that were available to them. They stood up in their classrooms every morning and pledged allegiance to the flag. They grew up believing that this was their home.

At some point in their lives their parents pulled them aside and told them the bitter truth—that they were not legally in America, they were undocumented, and they were vulnerable. At any minute, a knock on the door or a stop on the highway could result in not only their deportation but the deportation of every member of their family. Growing up is tough enough for an adolescent. I can't imagine growing up with this shadow over me, wondering whether at any moment a misstep or being in the wrong place might mean that I would be sent from this country and that my parents would be sent with me, but they grew up with that reality and with that danger.

They did some extraordinary things. They not only prospered in America and finished their education, they went on with great ambition, believing the day would come when they would get a chance to be part of this country.

Seventeen years ago, I introduced the Dream Act. The purpose of that bill was to give those young people a chance—a chance to earn their way to legal status, earn their way to citizenship. If they have a serious criminal record, they are gone and we want nothing to do with them. They had squandered any opportunity they had to be part of America's future. But if they were doing the right thing, leading a good life, working hard, finishing school, many of us believed they deserved a chance. In fact, at this point, 85 percent of Americans believe they deserve a chance, and that includes 60 percent of the people who voted for President Trump.

We have never passed the Dream Act and made it the law, but when I asked my former Senate colleague, President Obama, to see if there was something he could do by Executive order, he created DACA. DACA gave these young people a 2-year renewable protection.

They had to pay a \$500 fee, submit themselves to a criminal background check, and if they passed it, they would end up with a temporary, renewable right to stay in America. About 800,000 came forward and did it.

There were many more who were eligible but scared—scared that turning over their family's information and their personal information to this government or any government could turn out badly. Can you blame them? They have lived their whole lives in fear that a highway stop or somebody being arrested next to them could mean they would have to leave the only country they had ever known. But 800,000 stepped up and said: We will do it. I encouraged them. I went to so many meetings in Chicago, around the State of Illinois, and around the country telling them that this DACA Program was for real and that the government was giving them a pledge that they would stand by them on a renewable basis because of President Obama's order.

The program was a huge success. As I mentioned, 800,000 signed up, and some even renewed. Then came the decision by President Trump to end the program. What he said was that by March 5 of this year, there would be no more DACA. Those who were protected could play out their temporary protection but no renewals.

That is where the issue stood for the longest time. Many of us decided that we needed to do something about it and to accept the President's challenge and create a law—a law that would provide protection for these young people. Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, a Republican from South Carolina; Senator JEFF FLAKE, a Republican from Arizona; Senator CORY GARDNER, a Republican from Colorado; Senator MICHAEL BENNET, a Democrat from Colorado; and Senator BOB MENENDEZ, a Democrat from New Jersey—we came together and decided on a bipartisan basis to draw up a bill to try to solve this problem, be fair to these young people, and give them a chance to stay in America and earn their way to citizenship. When we proposed the bill to President Trump, he rejected it. In fact, he rejected six different bipartisan proposals to solve this problem.

So the deadline was looming and passed last week on March 5, and the program, by the President's proclamation, would have been finished were it not for two Federal courts that intervened and said: No, Mr. President. You may have overstepped. You may have done more than you can legally do. So we are going to protect these Dreamers, these DACA young people, until we resolve the question on your constitutional authority to make that decision.

At the current moment, more than 700,000 of these young DACA recipients are protected by a court order that required that they reopen DACA eligibility for those whose DACA protection had expired, the 2-year temporary protection. Now tens of thousands of them are coming forward and applying for DACA renewal.