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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.

Eternal God, as we join our hearts in prayer, we praise You for protecting and preserving this land we love.

Remind our lawmakers that by themselves, they aren't sufficient for the challenges of our times. Give them the wisdom to solve the problems that require more than human ingenuity. May they never fail to do the very best they can, striving to please You in their every endeavor. Lord, when they are perplexed, provide them with the clarity of Your guidance. May Your will be done and Your purposes carried out above party and personality.

We pray in Your strong 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. YOUNG). The majority leader is recognized.

### TRIBUTE TO JOHN MCCAIN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this week marks an important anniversary for an exceptional American. Forty-five years ago yesterday, our friend and colleague JOHN MCCAIN was released after more than 5½ years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam.

The "Hanoi Hilton" was the site of unspeakable brutality, but it was also

a crucible of character, where a brave patriot was tested and grew into a generational leader.

Here in the Senate, we are not only grateful that JOHN MCCAIN was welcomed home, we are especially grateful that he answered yet another call to serve, bringing that leadership to this body for more than 30 years. His leadership and his example are as important today as they have ever been.

### APPOINTMENT OF LARRY KUDLOW AND NOMINATION OF KEVIN MCALEENAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, yesterday the President named Larry Kudlow as the next head of the National Economic Council.

Larry is well known as a happy warrior for pro-growth economics and widely respected for his expertise in fiscal policy. The country will be lucky to have Larry serving in this role. I look forward to continued engagement with the White House team that will now benefit from his insight.

Speaking of highly qualified personnel, here in the Senate yesterday afternoon, we voted to advance Kevin McAleenan's nomination to serve as Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection. This is an essential post, and Mr. McAleenan is an excellent nominee.

I urge everyone to join me in voting for his confirmation when we return on Monday.

### ALLOW STATES AND VICTIMS TO FIGHT ONLINE SEX TRAFFICKING BILL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, the Senate took a big step forward for community banks, credit unions, and other small lenders on which communities across America rely for access to credit.

On a strong bipartisan vote, we passed Senator CRAPO's legislation to

streamline the Dodd-Frank Act so regulations intended for Wall Street place less of a crushing burden on Main Street.

Next up is legislation to combat sex trafficking. Debate on this issue will begin today.

It might be easy to imagine sex trafficking doesn't happen here. It would be easy to pretend it is only a problem in other parts of the world, but that is dead wrong.

Trafficking is a crisis right here in the United States. From 2010 to 2015, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children saw reports of suspected child sex trafficking increase more than eightfold—an eightfold increase. Last year alone, more than 8,500 cases of human trafficking were reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

As Senator PORTMAN has been informing us throughout his tireless work on this issue, sex trafficking has moved from the street corner to the smartphone. That is, in large part, because a 1996 law meant to protect online speech is now misused as a shield to stop sex traffickers and those who profit from their crimes from facing the rightful consequences.

I am as strong a defender of the First Amendment as you will find. I was in the Congress in 1996. I voted for the Telecommunications Act that included this provision, as did the vast majority of my colleagues. Let me assure you, not one of us intended to create a special protection for platforms that knowingly allow sex traffickers to exploit children.

The legislation we will consider would ensure that institutions that knowingly facilitate sex trafficking can be held accountable for their actions.

There is a reason why 67 Senators have joined Senator PORTMAN in support of legislation to accomplish this. There is a reason why the White House

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



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is strongly supportive. American children should not be sold—online or anywhere else. America's families should not be victimized by such evil, and America's laws should not be misused to protect those who perpetrate these crimes or those who, according to the stunning subcommittee report, knowingly give them space and tools to operate while profiting in the process.

Several of us have worked hard on this issue for a number of years. It is now past time to take this additional step. When we vote next week, that time will have come.

#### TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, few subjects are closer to the heart of parents than their children's education. That is why Republicans made sure the historic tax reform we passed last year included a provision, championed by Senator CRUZ and others, that will help parents choose an education for their children that makes sense for their family.

A recent article in the *Courier-Journal* in Louisville, KY, shared the story of one family whose second grade son had struggled with an undiagnosed learning disability. He had trouble keeping up with his public school class. So like many parents facing similar challenges, his family decided to send him to a private school with smaller classes and more individual attention, but that was a tough financial decision. Even though both parents worked, affording tuition was a struggle.

Families like this are why Republican tax reform gave parents more flexibility in paying educational expenses. The law builds the foundation for important expansions of the tax-advantaged college savings accounts known as 529 plans. As a result of tax reform, we are empowering families to use these tax-exempt accounts not only for college expenses but also for tuition at private and religious schools, K-12.

The philosophy here is simple: More choice is better than less. That really is the moral of the story on tax reform—getting government out of the way, letting families keep more of their own income, and empowering Americans to make the economic choices that make sense for them.

Parents know best what works for their children. So if we can get government out of the way so the IRS takes less from families and parents, and parents get more control over their kids' education, we ought to do it.

The young man from Louisville is in the fifth grade now. His new private school was able to properly diagnose and approach his dyslexia. He is thriving. Now, thanks to tax reform, school choice will soon become more affordable for families like his.

Historically, helping families save for schooling costs has been a bipartisan priority. In 1996, I worked with Senator Bob Graham and other friends

across the aisle to create section 529 in the first place. Five years later, I sponsored legislation to let families tap into 529 plans tax-free. It ended up in the 2001 tax cuts—again, a bipartisan affair, but this time was different.

No Democrats in the House or the Senate—not a single one—voted for this historic tax reform law. They tried to block this law to help families across America afford schooling of their choice. This time, Republicans had to do it all by themselves. Fortunately, we got it done for American families.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### ALLOW STATES AND VICTIMS TO FIGHT ONLINE SEX TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2017—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 1856, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 339, H.R. 1865, a bill to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to clarify that section 230 of such Act does not prohibit the enforcement against providers and users of interactive computer services of Federal and State criminal and civil law relating to sexual exploitation of children or sex trafficking, and for other purposes.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, since the Republicans jammed through a massive corporate tax cut in December, hardly a day goes by that we don't read about a corporation using the savings to purchase its own stock. The average citizen may ask: What is that all about?

Well, when a company purchases its own stock, it is sort of artificially making less stock, buying it back, and raising the price of the shares. Why do they do that? There are two reasons, both to benefit the corporate CEOs but not the workers. First, corporate CEOs have a lot of the stock themselves, so they make money; second, they look better when the stock price goes up. But the stock price isn't going up because the company has sold more goods, been more productive, bought new machinery, or found a new product. The stock simply goes up because they have decreased the number of shares. It is a scam in a certain sense,

helping corporate CEOs, helping shareholders—80 percent of the shares are held by the top 10 percent, so it doesn't really help average Americans, and that is including 401(k)s—but it doesn't help the worker.

We have heard many claims from our Republican friends: Pass this tax bill, and the workers will benefit. Well, unfortunately, now we see who is really benefiting. Just as we predicted, it is the corporate CEOs and the wealthiest of Americans.

Just recently, the total amount of share buybacks surpassed \$220 billion this year. According to the market data firm, TrimTabs, share buybacks in 2018 averaged \$4.8 billion a day—a day—double the pace for the same period last year.

For a few weeks, right after the President passed his tax bill, what happened? They had these companies announce bonuses for average workers. Very few Americans saw those bonuses—a lot of hoopla, but not much else. The bonuses—not wage increases, not new hires, but one-time annual bonuses—anyone who gets them, God bless them; there have just been so few. Those bonuses are being overwhelmed by a deluge of corporate share buybacks, which do not benefit the average worker, but benefit the CEOs and the heads of the companies.

According to an analysis by JUST Capital, only 6 percent of the capital allocated by companies from the tax bill has gone to employees, while nearly 60 percent has gone to shareholders—again, to the corporate CEOs who own those shares, the wealthiest of Americans who own the vast majority of shares. Ten times more capital is going to shareholders than to workers.

So this bill, which is poorly structured and aimed at the wealthy, ain't working. The more Americans see it—you know, there was an initial thrust: Oh, we like the tax bill. At first, it was unpopular as we talked about it here on the floor. Then, with these bonuses and the stock market going up, popularity went up a little. Now it is flattening out and even heading down. In the last three polls, fewer people liked this tax plan, and that is going to keep happening, my Republican friends, because they know what it was aimed at and you know what it was aimed at—the corporate CEOs who came to lobby you and the wealthy individuals who came to lobby you. It is no wonder the American people are starting to turn on the Republican tax bill. Polls have shown its popularity is underwater and trending downward, not up.

This idea that tax cuts would be a political panacea for Republicans come November is losing altitude fast. Remember, that is what our Republican friends said: Well, maybe people are upset with the President's tweets, and maybe this and that are not going so well; maybe they are not accomplishing that much, but now, with the tax bill, we will win the election.

Well, look at the Pennsylvania election where a Democrat won the district