

applicants. One study traced roughly 25 percent of the decline in workforce participation between 1999 and 2015 to the opioid crisis. That amounts to about 1 million missing workers. It is no wonder that the Trump administration reports that the epidemic cost our economy a half trillion dollars in 2015 alone.

The economic cost pales in comparison to the human cost that addiction and joblessness inflict. The Comprehensive Addiction Recovery through Effective Employment and Reentry Act, or CAREER Act, would bring targeted relief to the States most devastated by substance abuse. This State-based pilot program would encourage local businesses and treatment groups to form partnerships to help those in recovery find and maintain employment.

The legislation expands housing block grants to encourage more transitional housing options for recovering addicts until they secure permanent arrangements. It gives States more flexibility to spend Federal career services and training funds to support specific initiatives dedicated to helping individuals transition from treatment to the workforce. In short, this bill does exactly what the experts tell us needs to be done on this front.

This morning, Chairman ALEXANDER and the HELP Committee are reviewing comprehensive opioid legislation. I commend the chairman for his diligent efforts on this subject. It is my hope that the committee will choose to include some of the proposals in the Protecting Moms and Infants Act and the CAREER Act in the larger package that they are developing.

This epidemic requires our continued attention. On behalf of those in Kentucky and all over the country who are struggling, we are determined to keep doing our part.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Madam President, on one final matter, the passage of Republicans' historic tax reform last December was just the latest illustration of the diverging paths Republicans and Democrats envision for our economy.

For the better part of the last decade, our Democratic colleagues' ideas ran their course. We were promised that they would help us recover from the financial crisis. But it wasn't a recovery for all Americans. In fact, the path put forward by our Democratic colleagues had two distinct lanes. The express lane was for major cities like New York and San Francisco. Urban areas with more than 1 million residents captured 90 percent of the Nation's population growth and nearly 75 percent of new jobs created between 2010 and 2016. Seventy-five percent of new jobs created between 2010 and 2016 went to these large urban areas.

Those select communities actually made up some ground, but working

families and job creators in America's smaller cities, towns, and rural communities were stuck in the slow lane. There, job opportunities dried up as investment dollars hit the road. There, Americans learned what it feels like when Washington, DC, leaves you behind. But, fortunately, these communities are among the first to feel the benefits of the new Republican approach.

The historic tax relief we passed last year cut taxes for American families and gave employers more flexibility to expand, hire, and give their workers bonuses, raises, and new benefits.

As my colleague Senator YOUNG reports, the results in Indiana are adding up. He heard from a Hoosier in Cedar Lake who is expanding his family milk-hauling business, and a Kokomo small business owner who is now hiring more workers. I recently read that over in Ellettsville, one family has found an additional \$200 in their monthly paychecks—enough to cover a week's worth of groceries.

I don't think my colleagues across the aisle intended to make life more difficult for middle-class families across the country. It is just that these leftwing policies make it harder, not easier, for American workers and job creators to actually get ahead. But when my Democratic friends had the chance to join us and deliver historic tax relief to American families, they stood firm and tried to block tax relief on a party-line basis. One of Indiana's own Senators tried to block all that good Indiana news from happening.

I am proud that Republicans overcame that obstruction and got tax reform accomplished for all Americans.

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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Stuart Kyle Duncan, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

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

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

NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, yesterday, after some drama and a rare act of civility on the part of Senator COONS, for which I applaud him, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the nomination of Mike Pompeo as Secretary of State. This is despite Chairman CORKER repeatedly pointing out how qualified for this appointment Director Pompeo actually is, but, apparently, it fell on deaf ears.

This sort of treatment is unprecedented, in my memory certainly, for a Secretary of State. Director Pompeo was, in fact, first in his class at West Point and led the Harvard Law Review. He served his country in the military and served the people of Kansas in Congress, not to mention the fact that Mike Pompeo already serves in one of the most sensitive and important positions in the Trump administration as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

I spoke yesterday about the confirmations of some of the most recent Secretaries of State, not just Secretaries Clinton and Kerry. Secretary Kerry got all but three votes in the Senate, and Secretary Clinton lost only two votes in the Senate, but I also spoke of Secretary Powell and Secretary Rice. All were confirmed overwhelmingly because the Senate has always had a tradition, until now, of showing some deference to the President when confirming nominees to positions like this that have national security importance. The world needs to know that this President has confidence in this nominee, and he does. That is the key to his effectiveness in international diplomacy—knowing he has the President's ear.

Our Democratic friends once upon a time acknowledged that, in the words of the senior Senator from Delaware:

The President, regardless of what party they are from, needs, for the most part, to have the team they want to put in place. They have been elected to lead. Let's give them a chance to lead.

The opposition we are seeing breaks with this longstanding tradition in a shameful and partisan way. Of course, our Democratic colleagues have been slow-walking and obstructing qualified nominees since the President was sworn in, just to hinder progress for hindering progress's sake alone. This is the kind of hyperpartisan approach to foreign policy that threatens to harm our national security because this is an important national security post. Not only should we confirm Mr. Pompeo so the President can have the support of his full Cabinet, but also so the American people can have the assurance that our national security is not being treated like a pinata that our Democratic colleagues are whacking with a stick.

The American people can see through this kind of concerted effort to prevent the President from filling Cabinet roles that deserve to be filled. In fact, that seems to be the approach: wherever, whenever, however to block President Trump from accomplishing anything he seeks on behalf of the American people, even though he was elected President of the United States.

Several editorial boards have already pointed out the importance of filling this position and have urged our Democratic colleagues to allow Director Pompeo to be confirmed expeditiously. USA Today editorial writers penned a piece saying:

Unless a nominee has clear ethical or competency failings, presidents should be accorded wide latitude to select top aides whom they trust and agree with. Pompeo passes that test and merits approval.

The Washington Post writes: “Mr. Pompeo should be deployed to Foggy Bottom in the hope that he will fulfill his promise to revive and reassert U.S. diplomacy.”

The Chicago Tribune writes: “Pompeo knows well how to work with both Congress and the president—who trusts him so much he sent him on a secret mission to Pyongyang to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un” in advance of the President’s meeting with him in a few weeks.

It doesn’t stop there. There are nearly a dozen editorial boards that say the same thing these newspapers have—that Mr. Pompeo is undoubtedly qualified and the President trusts him, and on these two points, the Senate should confirm him.

The flip-flop our Democratic colleagues are doing from last year, when 15 of them supported Mr. Pompeo’s nomination to the CIA, should be a source of embarrassment. To say that somehow the job of the Secretary of State is more important or more sensitive than that of the CIA Director—both of them are extraordinarily important. If they had the confidence in him to vote to confirm him to the CIA and are now searching for reasons to support a “no” vote for Secretary of State, it is pretty clear what is happening. Some of the most radical activists in the Democratic base are clearly getting to some of these Senators.

There is still time to put country above politics, national security over the next election, and principle over posturing. I urge all of our colleagues to give this nominee the same treatment the Senate gave Secretaries Powell, Rice, Kerry, and Clinton, and confirm Mr. Pompeo as our next Secretary of State.

I yield the floor.

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. SCHUMER. Madam 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

SENATE RULES ON NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the Rules Committee will mark up Senator LANKFORD’s resolution tomorrow to change the rules on the consideration of nominees to benefit the Senate majority. Of course, the majority in the Senate can already approve of a nomination on a party-line vote for all nominees up to and including now the Supreme Court since Leader MCCONNELL elected to change those rules last year.

Why the need for further erosions to minority rights in the Senate? The Republicans argue it is because they are facing “historic” obstruction of the President’s nominees.

A few points on that: First and foremost, the truth is the Democrats have cooperated with the majority on non-controversial nominees, like career ambassadorships and civil servants, for a long time now. Before each recess, there is a long list of names that is approved. Before the last recess, the Senate had confirmed nearly as many nominations in 2018 as President Obama had confirmed in the analogous year of 2010. Let me repeat that. Before the last recess, the Senate had confirmed almost the exact same number of nominees in 2018 as President Obama had confirmed in 2010, the second year of his Presidency.

So this idea that it is historic—bunk. You can tell it is bunk because at the same time our Republicans and even the President himself, on some days, complain about obstruction, on other days, the President and the Vice President are boasting about how many judges they have filled on the bench.

This morning, President Trump said:

We put [on] a tremendous amount of [Federal] district [court] judges. We are setting records.

I say to my Republican friends and the President: You can’t have it both ways—on the one hand, historic obstruction and, on the other, a record pace of confirmations that you brag to your base about. You can’t have it both ways. It is hypocrisy.

A second point: The Republican majority has already taken brazen steps during this Congress to limit minority rights on nominations. I mentioned the leader breaking the rules on Supreme Court nominees. Let’s not forget that he broke the rules after letting Merrick Garland sit there while not allowing a nomination. It takes a lot of gall to complain about obstruction when Leader MCCONNELL opened the gates to obstruction—made obstruction his watchword—when he did what he did to Merrick Garland. He didn’t stop. The Republicans have not stopped this year. The Republicans have engaged in hardball tactics at the district and circuit court levels.

Here is what happened. Take the Republican seat that is vacant on the Seventh Circuit. Because Senator LEAHY—then-chairman—and, later,

Senators HATCH and, I believe, GRASSLEY honored the blue slip, a seat in the Seventh Circuit that belongs to Wisconsin was held open for 6 years by their refusing to approve two nominees by President Obama. Now the President has nominated a very conservative judge, Michael Brennan, who has failed to earn the recommendation of the bipartisan commission that is respected in Wisconsin and was set up by both Senators BALDWIN and JOHNSON—one a Democrat, one a Republican—to recommend Federal nominees. Yet this administration has no known concern about the real qualifications of the judges as long as they meet the hard-right checklist.

Despite the fact that Senator BALDWIN has not returned a blue slip for Mr. Brennan, Chairman GRASSLEY has moved him out of committee anyway. This is the second time Chairman GRASSLEY has ignored the blue slip tradition. The blue slip tradition was faithfully honored by Senator LEAHY when he was chairman. Our Republican colleagues have used it to an extent that, certainly, would be “historic” obstruction. For 6 years, a seat was vacant on the circuit court, and it was not the only one that had had long-term vacancies. Now, all of a sudden, because the Democrats want to discuss this, null this for a few days, Senator LANKFORD wants to change the rules. I know he only came to the Senate in 2014, but he ought to look a bit at the history before he gets into high dudgeon.

The issue of nominations has been fraught, and it is true there have been escalations on both sides. I am the first to say that. Despite the rhetoric from the majority party, the Democrats have worked in good faith this year to clear noncontroversial nominations expeditiously. When nominees require vetting, the Senate should have the tools to consider them thoroughly because, clearly, this administration is not taking the task of vetting seriously.

This is a final argument—and there are many good ones I would like to make. The Trump administration has done the worst job of vetting its nominees of any administration I can remember. It seems a slapdash process. It has had to withdraw the nominee for the Labor Department because he was not properly vetted; it has fired the Secretaries of HHS, State, and the VA; and it has faced a host of other controversies with staff and turnover. I dare say, if Mr. Pruitt had been properly vetted, he may not have been nominated given what we have found out.

Now we hear that the new nominee for the VA Secretary—the President’s personal doctor—is on hold because of some troubling allegations. How did he get through the process with all of these allegations not even having been made public? My guess—there was not proper vetting. I was not there, but it is speculative that, maybe, one day, the President, who we know acts on