

make purchases, which of course then benefit the companies and workers who produce what they are buying. Of course, it is especially good for the 42 million Americans whose jobs are supported by the retail industry.

According to industry data, more than 6 in 10 Americans work in retail at some point in their career, so this continued prosperity is really significant. There is little question that tax reform is to thank for a significant portion of this progress.

For one thing, our middle-class tax cuts are directly boosting families' discretionary income. As the Wall Street Journal reported this week, "many households are experiencing less withholding from their paychecks thanks to the tax overhaul."

Analysts also point to the business side of tax reform, which is letting more U.S. employers expand and hire. That means more jobs for American workers, which means more income for American families, which means more money in the cash registers of American small businesses. The virtuous cycle goes on.

The American people and most fair observers are marveling at what our economy is delivering to workers and middle-class families, but I am starting to think our Democratic colleagues may have forgotten what a successful economic agenda looks like because even in the face of headline after headline and testimony after testimony from job creators we represent, they try to brush off this impressive growth as nothing serious, and they advocate for repealing or undoing the Republican policies that are helping to make it happen.

Fortunately, Republicans know full well how to cut taxes, trim back regulations, and get Washington out of the American people's way. It is just what we have done. It is just what we will continue to do.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRUMP-PUTIN SUMMIT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday, President Trump went through a walk back. President Trump's walk back performance was pathetic. It was weak, insincere, and thoroughly unconvincing. The President read a scripted clarification yesterday like he was in a hostage situation. All you had to do was look at his face. He couldn't even fully commit to it, adding off-the-cuff that other people could also be responsible for election interference in 2016. That is hardly a walk back, and it was concerning only one particular comment. The President did not address his lavish praise for Vladimir Putin in Helsinki. Is he going to walk that back? He blamed both countries—the United States and Russia—for the sour relations between us. Is he going to walk that back? He said U.S. stupidity and foolishness, not Russian aggression, was the reason our relationship with Russia was so bad. Is he going to

walk that back? He did not address his brazen attacks on the FBI while on foreign soil. Is he going to walk that back?

Now, late last night and this morning, the President is back to celebrating his meeting with Putin. He is walking back the walk back. That is what he did this morning. This is like Charlottesville redux. We all know what the President really thought. We know what he thought at Charlottesville. The walk back was unconvincing, and he went back to his old ways. We know what he thought at Helsinki. The walk back was unconvincing. And now, with his tweets this morning, he is back to his old ways.

The only reason there was a walk back is that the President was forced by pressure from many of my Republican friends here, from his allies in the media, and his own White House staff. They all pressured him to give that temporary walk back. But it is clear from today's tweets that he doesn't mean it, that he doesn't believe it, and, frankly, neither does anybody else. It is clear that he still believes President Putin over the consensus of the American intelligence community, and that puts Americans' security gravely at risk.

The President's reluctant, ham-handed, half-hearted "clarification" yesterday—almost entirely reversed this morning—is woefully inadequate. His behavior in Helsinki continues to demand a response from Congress, and there are many things we can do. But later this morning, if anything is true to form, the President will hold a Cabinet meeting, and his advisers will shower him with thanks and praise—this is what he craves—and will provide, perhaps, another version of what happened in Helsinki.

Given what happened in Helsinki and given that the President's walk back was so weak, there are several things we as a Congress can and should do. Talking the talk is not enough. Walking the walk is what is so important here. We need to act, not simply say "tsk, tsk; bad President" and then go back to business as usual, because the American polity, the American security, and the view of America in the eyes of the world have taken a severe setback. It is up to us in the Congress to try to undo that.

I mentioned a whole host of actions this body can take to counter Russia's malign activity, punish Putin for interfering in our elections, prevent him from doing it again, and ensure that the President is doing what is necessary to stand up for American interests. The Senate is not powerless to take action in the wake of President Trump's indefensible performance at his summit with Vladimir Putin. Let me reiterate and suggest some things we should do, and I believe we should do all of these.

First, our Republican colleagues need to join us in demanding immediate public testimony from the President's

national security team—those who were in Helsinki and those who would have knowledge of what happened in Helsinki.

We need to have immediate public testimony from Secretary Pompeo, from DNI Director Coats, and from Ambassador Huntsman.

Above all, we need the translator who was present at the one-on-one meeting with President Putin to testify openly before Congress. That is not usually done, but there are almost always other people in the room, so you don't need the translator. But for some reason—a reason that Americans and the world are wondering about—President Trump wanted no one else in the room. Having the translator come testify and tell us what happened there is an imperative. It is so important. It is rare for translators to come before Congress, but in this case, it is warranted—A, because no one else was in the room, by the President's direction, and B, because what happened there might have been so important, given what happened in public a few short hours afterward. The translator works for the Federal Government, works for the taxpayers, and may be the only person who can accurately report what President Trump said to President Putin behind closed doors, what concessions were made to Vladimir Putin. We want to know. Did the President make concessions that hurt our national security? What did he agree to?

Congress has a duty to conduct responsible oversight of the executive branch, particularly after what the President did in Helsinki. The President's summit calls for oversight. Having these people—particularly the translator—come testify is important. I understand Secretary Pompeo will appear before the Foreign Relations Committee next week, which is good, but we need to hear from others, including the translator. I urge Leader MCCONNELL and his leadership team to immediately request a hearing of the people I mentioned.

Second, the Republican leadership should soon place on the floor—ASAP—bipartisan legislation, led by Senators BOOKER, GRAHAM, COONS, and TILLIS, to protect the special counsel from political interference. This legislation passed out of the Judiciary Committee with bipartisan support. It has four sponsors—two Democrats, two Republicans. If Leader MCCONNELL is serious about the checks and balances and if what he said in the last day or two were not just meaningless words, he will put this legislation on the floor. It will pass.

Alongside demanding testimony from the President's national security team, passing legislation to protect the special counsel is probably the most important thing this body could do to ensure that President Trump's recklessness does not precipitate a constitutional crisis.

Third, we should ratchet up sanctions on Putin and his cronies, not

water them down. The sanctions this body passed by an overwhelming bipartisan margin of 98 to 2—and I salute Leader MCCONNELL; he helped to bring it to the floor even though the President didn't like it—have not yet been fully implemented by the Trump administration. On our side, Senators MENENDEZ and VAN HOLLEN have some very good ideas about sanctions, and we should act on them.

Fourth, our Republican colleagues can and should insist that the President finally release his tax returns. We all know that the President broke decades of practice when he didn't release those returns—so damaging because his economic interests outside of the government are so large, complicated, and varied and so important because he deals with international finance in these situations.

There was no good reason not to release his tax returns then. Yet President Trump's inexplicable behavior in Helsinki has many Americans asking: What does Putin have over him that he is behaving in a way that is, basically, inexplicable by any rational, logical line of thinking? That is why his tax returns will be so important. We should pass legislation that requires the President to release his tax returns. It was important before, but it is much more important now, after Helsinki.

Fifth, the Republicans should demand with us that the President insist the 12 Russians who have been indicted for our election interference and information warfare be handed over. Putin may not do it, but at least we ought to show how serious we are as a country. The President ought to show how alarmed he is that this happened, and the best way to do that is for our Republican colleagues to join with us. They will have more influence than we will have in asking him to do so.

Finally, we should have bipartisan legislation on election security. Together, in a bipartisan way, with the help of my friend from Tennessee—a senior member of Appropriations—in the last omnibus bill, we passed \$380 million for election security. As I understand it, that money is now being sent out to help the States, but we have to do more. There is bipartisan legislation. Senators KLOBUCHAR and LANKFORD and Senators VAN HOLLEN and RUBIO have good legislation that could help beef up our election security. We ought to move on it.

Our country—our cyber networks and our election systems—is under constant attack from adversaries like the Russians. There is bipartisan consensus that we must harden our election infrastructure. This has led to the legislation I mentioned by KLOBUCHAR, LANKFORD, VAN HOLLEN, and RUBIO. There is other legislation by Senators HARRIS and WYDEN. I urge the Republican leader to let us move on one or more of these bills.

We should do all of these things, not just one or two—all of them. I can't think of a logical reason not to do any

of them other than out of fear of offending the President. Times like these call for us to do more. We have already heard some of our Republican colleagues say “let's move on” after what the President said yesterday—as I mentioned, his so-called walk back was not a walk back at all—and that if we cared about our Nation's security, we would move forward.

The final thing I would say to my Republican colleagues is this: This is a moment that will be remembered in American history. It is not going away. This is a moment that will be remembered next week, next month, in November of 2018, in November of 2020, and way beyond. The Helsinki summit is now an unalterable fact in American history—a moment when, unfortunately, an American President humiliated his own country and himself before a foreign dictator. It was a terrible sign of weakness by this President, and it, unfortunately, weakens the office he holds.

Yet it can be remembered as a moment when a bipartisan majority in Congress—Democrats and Republicans in their dropping all trappings of party—links arms and stands up for our country after our President has refused to do so. Let's hope it is. Let's hope it is.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. President, I know my colleagues are waiting, and I appreciate their indulgence as I have one final point on the Supreme Court and Brett Kavanaugh.

I just read in a very recent interview that Judge Kavanaugh was asked, if granted the opportunity, whether he would overturn precedent in any one case. Judge Kavanaugh initially declined to answer. He then paused and said, on second thought, he would overturn the precedent in *Morrison v. Olson*. That is the case that upheld the constitutionality of the independent counsel law. I will make two brief points on the subject.

First, Judge Kavanaugh's response demonstrates he is willing to answer direct questions about precedent—which precedents he agrees with and which precedents he would overturn. I hope, during the hearings, we will not suffer the tried-and-true verbal gymnastics of nominees who have refused to answer questions on existing precedent. Judge Kavanaugh had no qualms about that in that interview.

Second and more immediately, considering everything we know about Judge Kavanaugh's expansive view of Executive power and accountability, the fact that *Morrison v. Olson*—of all of the cases in the history of the Supreme Court—is the first case he would think of overturning is deeply, deeply troubling.

We already know he believes a President shouldn't be investigated while in office, that a President can't be indicted while in office, that a President doesn't have to follow laws that the President “deems”—his word—uncon-

stitutional. Clearly, Judge Kavanaugh's judicial philosophy incorporates an almost monarchical view of Executive power and accountability, animated by a belief that our Chief Executive gets to play by a different set of rules.

Judge Kavanaugh, particularly after this interview, needs to recuse himself from anything having to do with the Mueller probe given his record and the fact that he was nominated by the subject of the investigation he could very well end up ruling on.

Once again, I thank my colleagues.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

TARIFFS

Mr. JONES. Mr. President, I rise to discuss an issue that is of great importance to my constituents in Alabama and to many other people across the country. At issue is the health of our automotive industry.

Unfortunately, the health of my State's automobile industry is being threatened not by unfair competition or illegal practices but by significant tariffs proposed by the President. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, more than a half a million Alabama jobs are supported by global trade, meaning more than one in every four Alabama jobs is tied to trade.

One of the key reasons Alabama has such a robust trade posture is due to our automotive manufacturing industry. I am old enough to remember what it was like before auto companies came to Alabama in the 1990s, starting with Mercedes. At the time that Mercedes came, many of Alabama's manufacturing facilities were closing down and moving to other countries. Yet, one by one—from Mercedes, to Honda, to Hyundai, and now to Toyota and Mazda, which are breaking ground on a new plant very soon—these automakers came to Alabama and breathed new life into our State's economy. They support, today, some 57,000 Alabama jobs, and our auto exports topped \$11 billion in 2017. That doesn't even include the new Toyota-Mazda plant in Huntsville, which is going to add another 4,000 jobs and \$1.6 billion in economic development.

After having no automobile industry 30 years ago, Alabama has become the third largest exporter of automobiles in this country. In only the past 15 months, every major automobile manufacturer in Alabama has announced an expansion to total 5,400 jobs and \$3.3 billion in investments. This industry has been a phenomenal success in Alabama and, more importantly, for the men and women who rely on these very good-paying jobs to support their families and to build better lives.

That is why it is a priority for me and colleagues like my friend, Senator ALEXANDER from Tennessee, to keep our States' automotive industry thriving. Yet, recently, this industry has come under attack. In May, President Trump threatened a 25-percent tariff