

Consumer confidence is up. Unemployment is down. Markets are breaking records. From small businesses to our largest job creators, pay raises, bonuses, and plans for new investments are all in season.

Of course, the engine of American prosperity is the American people, but smart policy can help by getting the government out of their way.

Last December, Republicans in the House and the Senate joined the President to deliver once-in-a-generation tax reform. Every day, more evidence piles up that tax reform is already working for the American people. The headlines are full of major employers announcing pay raises and bonuses for workers, as well as new investments.

For example, Brown-Forman—a global spirits company headquartered in my hometown of Louisville that employs more than 1,000 Kentuckians—announced yesterday that tax reform will help the company to start a new charitable foundation for community investment and commit \$120 million to fund employee pensions.

Soon, thanks to tax reform, a Main Street small business owner will finally be able to realize her dream to expand into the vacant shop next door. Of course, that will mean hiring more help.

Soon, thanks to tax reform, a father-and-son manufacturing plant will be able to afford the new equipment they have been eyeing and give their workers new skills in the process.

Stories like these may not make waves here in Washington, but believe me, they will be front-page news in communities all across our country. From coast to coast, Americans' lives will improve as Main Street businesses operate for the first time under a 21st-century tax code.

This is not just a tax law for the big guys. Now even the smallest businesses will be able to take a significant deduction on their business income, giving them more money to buy new equipment, hire new employees, or provide health coverage for their team.

So much focus has been on bonuses, pay raises, and 401(k) matches, and for good reason. But we should not forget all of the jobs that will be created when businesses decide to invest more because they can immediately deduct their capital expenditures. I am already hearing from small business owners this law was designed to help.

Before tax reform, one franchise restaurant owner in Kentucky wrote me to say that “the current high tax rate that I pay as a pass-through entity reduces the amount of earnings I can reinvest into my business, employees, and community.” She went on to say, “I am very encouraged that tax reform is under way in Congress and hope that it can be accomplished in a timely manner.” Well, Republican majorities in Congress and the President did just that.

In Nicholasville, KY, another constituent of mine operates a rental busi-

ness for event equipment. He recently explained that “the relief that will be provided by the new tax bill gives companies like mine the capital to purchase new inventory . . . as well as hire additional employees.”

Summing it up, American enterprise is thriving. Tax reform helped make it happen.

#### 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 R.D. James, of Missouri, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. 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. 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

#### DACA AND OTHER ISSUES BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, there are now only 13 days remaining before the continuing resolution expires on February 8. In that short amount of time, we must seek a budget deal, an agreement on healthcare legislation, and a bipartisan bill to protect the Dreamers and provide for border security. All these items are important. All of them are urgent, and we are working hard to get them all done.

On the issue of immigration, the bipartisan group of moderate Senators should continue trying to find a consensus. I think that is an excellent idea. The White House, unfortunately, has proven unreliable and wildly unpredictable. Within the course of hours, they say different things. Every time the President moves forward on one thing, his staff pulls him back and undoes what he said. The action should be here in the Senate to find a narrow deal on DACA and border security.

Now, as we have found time and again, when we open up the negotiations to discussions of broad immigra-

tion reform, there is no end to what each party says could be on the table. Republicans want vast curtailment of legal immigration. Democrats want to discuss a pathway to citizenship for 11 million. That is a recipe for delay when we can't afford one. Some on the other side are insisting on expanding this beyond the DACA and border security issues. That will just delay. That will just make sure that things don't work.

My Republican colleagues, particularly the leader and his more moderate Members, should feel the pressure to get this done, or else this administration will start separating families, taking kids out of school, servicemembers out of our military, and workers out of our companies. They will rip them from the American fabric in which they are embedded. What a tragedy that would be.

So the clock is ticking on Dreamers, and we don't have time for extraneous issues that some on the right or the left might want to add that have nothing to do with DACA or border security. The clock is also ticking for pensioners, for victims of opioid addiction seeking treatment, and for our veterans seeking quality healthcare. We have other issues: rural infrastructure, childcare, things that Democrats want to get done in this deal. We have to get a budget deal and a DACA deal that can get 60 votes—13 days before Dreamers get a lot closer to deportation; 13 days to help our economy, our communities, and the middle class, who have been waiting for over a year for this Congress to do something for them, instead of just helping business interests.

FBI

Mr. President, now I want to focus on one more thing that really should disturb every American, and it certainly disturbs me—recent events concerning the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

For decades, the FBI has been our Nation's premier law enforcement agency, admired from one end of the country to the other. TV shows and movies all talked about how good the FBI was. We know because we trust them with protecting our country against many-faced threats: drug trafficking, terrorism, white-collar crime.

In 2016, the FBI—not politically, but just in the way it works to keep being vigilant to protect us in our security—was tasked with another mission of great importance—investigating Russia's interference in our elections.

As that investigation progressed, it found that members of the Trump campaign had concerning associations with the Russians in the lead-up to the election. That was pure law enforcement. That wasn't some political direction. Now that that investigation led by Special Counsel Mueller has resulted in two guilty pleas and two more indictments of Trump campaign officials, there seems to be a fervor on the other side to discredit what the special counsel's investigation has already revealed. That should give serious pause to Democrats, Republicans, and all

Americans. A foreign power, probably the one that is most in our face, Russia, is interfering in our elections. I don't care if it is Democratic elections, Republican elections, national elections, or local elections. When a foreign power interferes in our elections, that gnaws at the wellspring of our democracy. All of us should be giving the FBI space and encouragement to finish their investigation without delay or interference.

Instead, ever since Special Counsel Mueller was appointed, too many Republicans and too many in the right-wing media have been desperate to distract the Nation from his investigation.

First they waged an aggressive and coordinated—I would say shameful—attack on the integrity of the special counsel. I was in the gym this morning. I spoke to one of my senior Republican colleagues, who said he knew Mueller, and he knew what a fine man he was. He is a model public servant. He spent decades earning the trust and reverence of both parties. He was known as somebody who was a registered Republican through my years in Washington. He wasn't regarded as a partisan figure, somebody who would have vendettas, political or otherwise—no. It got so out of hand—I couldn't believe this—that a Republican Congressman suggested Special Counsel Mueller's investigation was a “coup,” on the floor of the House. That Congressman ought to go back and read his Constitution and read his history books. The rule of law is not a coup. I would say to that Republican Member of Congress: No person, not even the President, is above the law.

The political smear campaign has now bled into a spiraling and delusional attack on the FBI itself. The Republican majority on the House Intelligence Committee has, according to Representative SCHIFF, manufactured a secret memo of partisan talking points, full of innuendo and glaring omissions, intended to suggest widespread corruption at the Department of Justice and the FBI. They are very, very serious allegations, if they had any truth to them or backing. Adding to the impropriety, some of those same Republicans are now trying to release this slanderous memo—and that is what it is, a slanderous memo—to the public.

Since this investigation has started, our Nation has had to endure conspiracy after conspiracy from Republican Congressmen and Senators and, of course, from the rightwing press, which acts in total cahoots. There are conspiracies about “deep state” leaks and unmasking requests, phone taps at Trump Tower, Uranium One, who paid for the so-called Steele dossier, and today it is this memo. On and on and on, they are conspiracy theories with virtually no fact—paranoia, delusion. Why? Are they afraid of the truth of the Mueller investigation? It seems so.

Meanwhile, Republican Members of this body, I am ashamed to say, picked

up on casual texts sent between FBI agents to peddle the nonsense that there is a “secret society” at the Department of Justice, without a shred of evidence. I saw one of those—the Senator who was propagating this, this morning on television. It looked crazy. It looked delusional. It looked paranoid. What began as an attempt to discredit the investigator has now devolved into delusional, self-serving paranoia.

The Republican Party, which used to hold itself up as a law and order party, seems intent on destroying the credibility of our premier law and order agency and the hard-working men and women who serve there—all to assist a President who cares and knows very little about the boundaries of rule of law.

Imagine, the FBI, which for decades the Republican Party upheld—I remember lots of political debates here—now they are discrediting them with virtually no basis in fact. Guess who has joined the Republican campaign to attack the FBI. The Republican campaign to attack the FBI has been joined by the same forces that interfered in the 2016 election—Wikileaks, Julian Assange, and Russia.

Just a few years ago, those things were attacked by our Republican friends, particularly the hard right. Now they are joining them, wittingly or unwittingly. Can you imagine the outrage on the right if President Obama's message was being spread by Wikileaks, Julian Assange, or Kremlin sources?

Within hours of GOP lawmakers and FOX News calling for the release of the Nunes memo, Russian-linked bots began pushing the narrative using the hashtag “releasethememo”—Russian bots, hashtag “releasethememo.” Just a few hours after some of our Republican friends started this push, use of the hashtag spiked and was used 100 times more than any other hashtag by Kremlin-linked accounts.

We are witnessing an effort by the Russian Government to intervene and influence our democratic processes in real time. Every single American should be concerned by this, particularly when their elected officials are willing to work—wittingly or unwittingly—alongside Russia to manipulate our opinion. Some of our Republican colleagues—sadly, unfortunately, wittingly or unwittingly—are acting as allies of Russia's disinformation campaign. Can you imagine? Can you imagine? It is hard to make this stuff up, but it is real—hard-right Republicans and the Russians trying to discredit our premier law enforcement agency.

This country erected institutions like the FBI and the Department of Justice to defend the vital interests of the Nation without deference to political parties. Much like the Federal judiciary, they act as an essential check on political power—whosever power it is—a defense against creeping authoritarianism.

What the FBI is investigating right now is about shielding our democracy from the disinformation campaigns of foreign adversaries. Russia wants nothing more than to undermine our democracy by eroding people's faith in its institutions, for without resilient democratic institutions, there can be no democracy.

Make no mistake about it. Today Russia may be doing the same thing that a lot of our Republican colleagues are. Tomorrow they may be attacking our Republican colleagues. The Russians have no interests other than hurting America. So the Republican attacks on the credibility of the FBI and the Department of Justice are playing right into Putin's hands. They constitute an attack on democracy itself.

There has to be a line. There has to be a line where the interests of your political party stop, because to go any further would be to diminish our country. I say that to my colleagues here and in the House who have participated in this besmirching unfairly, paranoically, self-interestedly of the FBI. Peddling delusions of secret societies, “deep state” leaks, and coup d'etats cross the line of what anyone of any party should do. It has to stop.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

#### TAX REFORM

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, we have finally ended this government shutdown that was produced and directed by the Democrats in the Senate.

The reason Democrats decided to take this extreme step and shut down the government was because of the narrow issue of illegal immigration. They shut down services for citizens of the United States to provide services for people who are not citizens of the United States, and the Democrats have admitted it was all about this issue of illegal immigration.

There may have been another reason, as well, that Democrats wanted to shut down the government, and that was so they could change the subject being debated by people, talked about by friends, noticed by Americans, and making the headlines. That subject, of course, is the competence and optimism in the American economy—by workers, by people who are paying taxes, by people who realize how the Republican tax relief legislation is going to help improve their lives personally.

I think the success of the Republican tax relief bill scares a lot of Democrats. It scares them because every one of them voted against it. They didn't think it was a good idea to let people keep more of their hard-earned money. The Democrats thought it was a better idea for possibly the government to keep that money and use it and spend it in ways many people—certainly in Wyoming—feel is not a good use of that money. Families know how to get more value out of their dollars than the government ever will. Democrats voted