

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, now on one final matter, lately there has been no shortage of outstanding economic headlines:

“Small business confidence hits another record high.”

“U.S. workers get biggest pay increase in nearly a decade.”

“Open jobs outnumber U.S. unemployed for third straight month.”

But it is also important to look beyond the headlines and ask whether all Americans are benefiting from this new prosperity.

For years, under the last administration, much of the so-called recovery only touched some communities and some industries. Many vulnerable Americans fell further and further behind. Today, things are different. A growing and vibrant economy has room for everyone. The unemployment rate for young Americans age 16 to 24 is now the lowest it has been since July 1966. Labor force participation among this same group is at its highest level in nearly a decade. The unemployment rate for workers with less than a high school diploma is now at its lowest level in recorded history.

As work opportunities have opened back up, the number of Americans seeking Social Security disability benefits has plummeted. As one scholar told the *New York Times*, “When the economy gets better, employers are more willing to look to other labor pools and be more accommodating. . . . People with disabilities also have a sense there may be something out there that fits their needs.”

Remember, for much of the Obama economy, opportunity creation was so insufficient that many vulnerable Americans were effectively put right on the sidelines. The job market was too crowded. Openings were too few. But this thriving economy, helped along by Republican policies, is a different story. There are more and more opportunities for everyone.

This reminds us that it is capitalism and free enterprise, not new government programs, that best equip Americans to provide for their families and pursue happiness. Free enterprise is what has led an aviation tech maker in Colorado to lean on a high school-age technician, whose skills are “highly integral” to the company. Free enterprise is what has led a semitrailer manufacturer in Wisconsin to hire inmates, as they reenter the community after paying their debt, and help them rebuild upright lives. There is an old line often attributed to Ronald Reagan: “The best social program is a job.”

While our Democratic friends keep railing against tax reform and regulatory reform, keep insisting we should compile more money and power here in Washington, Republicans know better. We know that a real recovery is when Americans of all ages, all abilities, and in all parts of the country have more opportunities to earn their own success, and we are proud that our policies are helping make that happen.

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

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

REMEMBERING JOHN MCCAIN

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this is a sad time for the Senate and our Nation. With the passing of John McCain, our country lost a legend, and this Senate has lost a towering figure. I have lost a friend. America owes John McCain and his family our gratitude and respect for his courage and sacrifice and for the trials he endured to serve the Nation he loved.

John McCain entered this world with big shoes to fill. His father and grandfather were four-star admirals in the U.S. Navy. John McCain met and exceeded his family legacy.

I first met him 35 years ago, in 1982. We were brand-new freshmen Congressmen elected to the U.S. House. I spotted him on the other side of the floor in the Senate and, of course, I knew instantly who he was and worked up the courage to go over and introduce myself. Then, I asked him a favor.

I said: John, would you consider doing a cable TV show that I could send back to my Central Illinois district?

He said: Sure, I would be glad to.

I thought: That is amazing—a Democratic Congressman asking a new Republican Congressman to help him back in his district, and John McCain said yes.

It was the beginning of a friendship. That cable show wasn't shown beyond Central Illinois, but I still remember it and still thank John for his act of kindness. It was my first exposure to a unique style of communication that America would come to know as the “Straight Talk Express.” Sitting for that interview is a typically generous John McCain act, for which I am still grateful.

There is an old joke about an Irishman who walked past a brawl and said: Is this a private fight or can anyone get into it?

I think that man's name may have been McCain. Everyone who knew or served with John for any period of time got crosswise with him. I can remember there, in the well of the Senate, John McCain walking up to me, getting within an inch of my face and chewing me out about some article that he had read in the *Chicago Tribune*. He was so mad he was about to explode, and he wheeled around and walked away.

I thought: What did I say? I can't even remember the article.

I raced back to look up the *Chicago Tribune* article he referred to and still couldn't understand his anger, and I thought: How am I going to make

amends with John. He has been my friend for so long.

The next day he came up to me, and I got ready for the second round. He put his arm around me and said: It wasn't that bad after all. We are still friends.

That was typical John McCain—a volcanic temper but an embracing, loving approach when it came to friendship. That was John. He was passionate in his beliefs, but he was not a man to hold grudges. He understood that two people can disagree on issues today, and still both love this country and work together tomorrow.

Occasionally, he would invite you on a trip. Be careful. I said yes several times. A John McCain trip over a weekend was something you don't soon forget. If there is anybody out there who thinks that Senators with John McCain were sitting poolside drinking these mixed drinks with paper umbrellas, they have it all wrong. John McCain's trips on the weekend were more like Bataan death marches. From the minute you got on that plane until you got back to Washington, it was a nonstop schedule. Everything had to be done. We had to see three countries, not two, and we had to get it done and get back to Washington. You learned so much.

I went to Ukraine with John. I remember walking the streets of Kiev in Ukraine. People were coming up to John—people who remembered that he showed up in the Maidan Square when the revolution was underway and spoke for those who were defying Moscow—and they still remembered John McCain and couldn't wait to come up and say hello and thank him. It was that way in so many places of the world. I was lucky to be there. I was lucky to be a part of it, lucky to see history unfold, and lucky to count John as a friend.

John and I had our disagreements. In fact, there was one solid year when we barely spoke. At the end of that year, I found an excuse to walk over to his office to see him on some issue. I remember that he stood up and greeted me. He shook my hand. He looked me in the eye and said: I am glad this is over between us.

So was I. It was one of the happier days I served in the Senate.

His ability to see beyond party labels was one of the qualities that so many of us loved and admired about him. It was a lesson he learned from his family. It is a truth, I imagine, that he came to see even more clearly during the 5½ torturous years—two of them in solitary confinement—that he spent as a prisoner of war in that hellish place known as the Hanoi Hilton.

We are stronger together than we are divided. John McCain knew that. His entire life was a testimony to that powerful truth. It is why, as a prisoner of war, John McCain refused offers of release. He knew what the rules were. The rules were “first in, first out.” He was not the first in. He just happened

to be the son of an admiral, and the North Vietnamese were going to make him a symbol and release him. He wouldn't do it. He wouldn't accept it. His body was broken by the torture and the plane crash, but he stayed in that cell and waited his turn, until the moment came when he could leave with his head up.

John didn't want to be defined as a professional prisoner of war. I love the story about a party that was given for John and his fellow captives after they got home. One young man was telling the story of his confinement in some detail when he happened to look over and see John McCain. He suddenly felt conspicuous and said to John: I shouldn't be going on about my time as a prisoner of war. I was there for 6 weeks, and you were there for 5½ years.

With typical John McCain humor and wit, John replied: Oh, no, go right ahead. The first 6 weeks were the toughest.

Like Abraham Lincoln, John McCain knew that laughter helped to make the unbearable bearable, and like President Lincoln, he was secure enough in his own reputation and in his own achievements to be modest.

John endured the hell of the Hanoi Hilton more than many. He served in the Senate longer than many. He leaves his mark on this body and our Nation.

When the issue of torture and detention was front and center before the American people, when we were trying to decide what were the boundaries for this democracy, faced with the threat of terrorism, there was one voice in the Senate who was credible. It was John McCain.

I made speech after speech on the subject, but when John McCain got up and spoke about the issue of torture, there was silence on the floor of the Senate as we listened carefully. He proposed a resolution establishing humane standards of treatment, realizing the humanity we showed toward our prisoners is the same humanity we expected if Americans were taken prisoner. His effort was enacted by the Senate with over 90 votes, a strong bipartisan rollcall.

John McCain, more than anything, was a champion of the U.S. military—the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces. They never had a better friend. Our Nation's veterans and their families never had a stronger ally. He was a leader in the fight to curb the influence of special interests in politics and to make our government truly a government of, by, and for the people.

Russ Feingold and John McCain moved us toward what America is longing for—putting the special interests behind us, putting the people first, ending soft money.

He treasured our heritage as a nation of immigrants. I have such profound respect for John McCain's efforts to reach across the aisle and try to find solutions for America's broken immi-

gration system. Even as his own party railed against him, we spent almost a year together—eight Senators, four Democrats and four Republicans, led by John McCain—to write a comprehensive immigration reform bill. It was one of my proudest moments in the Senate. It was why I ran for the Senate. It was what John McCain told us over and over was to be our mission in life as Senators: To solve the problems facing America and not to be worried about taking some heat.

He took a lot of heat as a Republican who stepped up and offered a real solution to our comprehensive immigration challenge. We put together a bill over the course of a year. I think it was an extraordinary effort. We all had to compromise. John compromised and I compromised, but we ended up with a bipartisan bill that passed overwhelmingly on the floor of the Senate.

There hasn't been another moment like that in the time I have been here, and John led the way. He took a lot of grief for it. His poll numbers were not that good, particularly among the most conservative Republicans, but John knew we had a problem to solve, and he stepped out and did it. I was honored to be a part of the small group that worked night after night, week after week to put that effort together.

Of course, what I remember now more than anything is that middle-of-the-night vote a little over a year ago. He walked through that door, just having spoken on the telephone with President Trump, and he came to the well of the Senate and stood right next to that table. Because he had limited motion in his arm because of that plane crash and torture in Vietnam, he barely lifted his right arm and pushed his thumb down and said no. With that "no" vote, he preserved health insurance for millions of Americans, and he invoked the ire of conservative Republicans, who will never forgive him for that moment. It was one of the proudest, most courageous votes and moments in the history of the Senate. I was honored to be here and had a chance to thank him personally that night.

I also remember when he came to the floor and spoke at that desk, which is now bearing the vase of roses, a tribute to John McCain, and reminded all of us why we run for this office. Sure, it is a great title and a lot of Americans never get close to a title like U.S. Senator, but to John McCain and to many of us, it is much more. It is not only a great honor. It is a great challenge for us to do something with this title to solve the problems that face this country.

I didn't always agree with John, but I always respected the fact that he wanted the Senate to be an institution that was serving the people in this country and solving the problems we face.

John was principled and courageous time and again. There were times when we had our differences. I can recall

when he came to Illinois to campaign against me. He was campaigning on behalf of a State Representative in Illinois named Jim Durkin—not Durbin, but Durkin—who had been John's supporter for President in the State of Illinois. John returned the favor by campaigning for Jim Durkin against me. You might wonder, in this world of politics, how you react to a person who is trying to take your job away, which John was doing. I understood it. I expected it. Jim Durkin was loyal to John McCain, and John McCain was loyal to him and came in and campaigned for him.

After the election was over, the people of Illinois decided I should be the Senator. It didn't deter John McCain one bit from working with me from that point forward.

There is an empty space in this Chamber without John McCain. There is an empty space in America without his spirit. He will be missed, but he certainly will never be forgotten. I endorse the proposal to rename the Russell Senate Office Building in honor of Lieutenant Commander and Senator John McCain. Like Senator Schumer, I hope that decades from now, children who are visitors to the Capitol grounds will ask: Who was this McCain they named the building after? They will discover he was a man worthy of our respect, a man who in his heart was a public servant, a man who was an American hero.

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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING JOHN MCCAIN

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, as the Senate continues to mourn the loss of our friend and fellow Senator John McCain, let us dwell on how best to remember this great man; his friendship, his service, his integrity, his career in the Senate.

One of the ways to carry on his memory is for us to try to live up to the expectations he had for the Senate, expectations he shared with us even in his waning days: to act with more humility, to ignore the critics, to put aside our differences when necessary, and learn to trust each other more.

In Senator McCain's memory, we can try to live by those principles and make this Senate a place where, despite the noisy din of politics, progress can still be made.