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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BEN SASSE, a Senator from the State of Nebraska.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, enter the lives of our lawmakers today and give them pure hearts. Enlighten and illuminate their minds that they may know You, who are the way, the truth, and the life. When they are tired, refresh them; when they are lonely, cheer them; when they are tempted, strengthen them; and when they are perplexed, guide them. Lord, help them so to live that they will be prepared to see Your face in peace. Make our Senators positive people who are expectant of Your best for our Nation and world. Radiate Your hope through them so that America will remain a shining city on a hill. We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 9, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable BEN SASSE, a Senator from the State of Nebraska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SASSE thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADERSHIP TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, I mentioned that, already, 1 million Americans and counting will receive raises or special bonuses, thanks to the incentives created by the historic tax reform law that Congress passed and the President signed just last month.

For example, Darden Restaurants, Inc., which employs 175,000 people, announced it is preparing to invest \$20 million in its most important asset—its employees. AT&T announced that 200,000 employees would receive \$1,000 bonuses. In Kentucky, Turning Point Brands announced that their workers would also receive \$1,000 bonuses. So far, more than 100 companies have announced similar plans.

Across the country and a variety of different industries, workers are receiving significant one-time bonuses, permanent pay raises, more generous retirement contributions, or other benefits. And their employers confirm that it was tax reform that made this possible.

How is all this happening? How is it happening? After all, those who were

intent on opposing tax reform painted an apocalyptic picture. Over in the House, the minority leader said tax reform was “Armageddon.” Here in the Senate, my friend the Democratic leader said there was “nothing about this bill that suits the needs of the American worker.”

Fortunately, a majority in the House and a majority in the Senate knew better. We know that the economy is not a zero-sum game. We know it is completely backward to think that American businesses need to lose in order for American workers to win. To the contrary, in the 21st century economy, Americans are all in this together.

When our economy grows stagnant and when taxes and regulations make it harder for companies to compete with foreign ones, that is when wages fall flat and job opportunities dry up. But when Washington gets out of the way, cuts back regulations, and modernizes the Tax Code, when we give businesses more flexibility to invest and expand, then, as we are already seeing, workers reap the benefits.

This is not some partisan talking point. As one economist wrote just before we passed tax reform, “It’s the consensus view of professional economists” that “lowering corporate income taxes would increase the wages of workers.”

Tax reform became law less than 1 month ago—1 month ago—and thanks to tax reform, as this chart points out, 1 million American workers and counting are getting a bonus or a raise. That is what is happening, and this is just the beginning.

Raises and bonuses are not the only way tax reform is providing a big help to middle-class families, like the Kentuckians I represent. The law also cuts taxes substantially for individuals and families, so they can keep more of their own money and send less to Washington.

We reduced marginal rates. We doubled the standard deduction, effectively creating a new zero tax bracket

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



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for the first \$24,000 a family earns—zero taxes on the first \$24,000 a family earns. We significantly increased the child tax credit. We expanded the deduction for medical expenses, and the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act repealed the punitive individual mandate tax penalty at the heart of ObamaCare. That law penalized hard-working Americans twice—first by failing to create health insurance options that met the needs of working families and then by imposing a heavy fine on the families who didn't want or couldn't afford the coverage. By zeroing out that unfair penalty, we have repealed a core piece of ObamaCare and restored families' flexibility to choose the health insurance that works for them.

The result of all this is significant savings for middle-class American families. A typical family of four earning a median family income will keep more than \$2,000 this year that they would have otherwise sent to the government. Workers will begin to see the difference in their paychecks as soon as February. Less of their money will be deducted and sent to the IRS. More will be deposited into their own bank accounts.

So the early impact of this historic tax reform legislation is quite clear. Job creators and entrepreneurs are more optimistic, more than 1 million Americans are already getting raises and bonuses, and the groundwork is being laid for a more powerful and more competitive U.S. economy that attracts more investment and creates more homegrown jobs.

It is no surprise that, historically, tax cuts have enjoyed bipartisan support. This time, unfortunately, none of our Democratic colleagues chose to vote for this once-in-a-generation tax relief—not a one in the House or in the Senate. But I am proud that the majorities in Congress were able to pass this bill so that the President could sign it into law. One million Americans, and soon to be many more, will be grateful.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, there are a number of outstanding matters before the Senate that must be addressed by January 19. We must pass an

extension of government funding. We must reach a deal to lift the spending caps to spare devastating cuts to our military support and funding for urgent domestic priorities. We must extend the Children's Health Insurance Program and community health centers and the 702 FISA Court program. We must pass disaster aid, and we must resolve the future of the Dreamers.

Some of these issues, particularly CHIP and FISA, could have been dealt with by the majority a long time ago. There are bipartisan majorities that would have voted to extend those programs, but the majority leader chose not to put them on the floor because they were busy pursuing a partisan "favor the wealthy" tax bill.

Some of these issues still require further compromise. It is no secret that we haven't come to final agreement on the spending caps. Both Democrats and Republicans want our troops to have the resources they need to do the tough job we ask of them. At the same time, we Democrats want to make sure that we are making the right kinds of investments in the middle class. The whole campaign was about the middle class, and now we are going to abandon them because there are such needs for defense. The two are not mutually exclusive. We don't believe they are, and our Republican colleagues have sort of lost their grip on saying: Well, we can't increase the deficit, after a \$1.5 trillion tax cut mainly for the wealthy and powerful corporations.

So we are fighting hard to make sure we are making the right kinds of investments in the middle class. That is why we are pushing hard to raise the spending caps on the domestic side, so we can do more in the fight against the opioid crisis, so we can do more to help our brave veterans get quality healthcare, and so we honor the promise made to over a million pensioners who contributed to and earned every penny of their pensions. These are all very important issues. Ask a mom or dad whose kid is addicted to opioids whether that can wait. Ask a pensioner who is so nervous that he or she will not get enough dollars to retire on and feed themselves. Ask a veteran who has been waiting in line for healthcare because the Veterans' Administration is not fully funded for the healthcare needs of our veterans. They all think those are just as important—not more, not less than funding defense. We will stand firm and strong that both are important. The only argument our colleagues seem to have against this is that it increases the deficit and, as I said, they lost all claim to that one with the tax bill.

Now, teamsters, carpenters, and miners have worked their entire lives under the expectation that they could retire with a sense of dignity afforded by a modest pension. These are the ones our colleagues seem to be just adamantly opposed to. Let them go home to their miners, to their teamsters, to their food workers and tell

them: You don't deserve a pension even though you paid in every month.

We can't just shrug our shoulders and do nothing. We ought to fix it.

My friend, the majority leader, thinks defense is important, but the other is not. We Democrats believe both are important, and we must and should do both together. Surely, the deficit, again, can't be the problem after adding over \$1.5 trillion in red ink. So let's make investments we know are essential in our military and in our middle class.

We will also have to make sure the disaster package treats all our States and territories fairly; that California and Puerto Rico and the Mountain West and the U.S. Virgin Islands get the aid they need, just like Texas and Louisiana and Florida.

We have to reach agreement on a new healthcare package that admits the new reality of our healthcare system. The Republicans repealed the individual mandate in their tax bill, an act that will raise premiums and lower coverage. The old healthcare compromise legislation was crafted before the Republican tax bill. PATTY MURRAY has said, under new circumstances, we need a new proposal. We cannot just enact the previous Alexander-Murray bill because of the change our Republican colleagues made to the healthcare system.

Then, of course, there is the DACA issue. That is going to require further compromise. There are many Republicans in this Chamber who want to enshrine DACA protections into law—as every Democrat does—just as there are many Democrats who would pass additional border security measures into law—smart, reasonable, and practical border measures. A deal on this issue can be reached if both parties are committed to good-faith negotiations.

The problem thus far has been President Trump's insistence on a completely ineffective and absurdly expensive wall as part of any deal on DACA.

In fact, we learned this morning, in a stunning New York Times article by Ron Nixon, that the Trump administration is proposing to cut back from smart border security measures to pay for a border wall. I ask unanimous consent that the article by Mr. Nixon in the New York Times be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

According to the Times, which reviewed internal budget guidance from the OMB, the Trump administration would cut or delay funding for border surveillance, cut or delay funding for radar technology, patrol boats, and, maybe more crucially, Customs officers, all to ask taxpayers to pay for the wall—funding to upgrade surveillance aircraft, extremely effective at stopping illegal crossing at the border, particularly drugs, denied; funding to hire new Customs officers, denied; funding for video surveillance with infrared cameras in areas with high incidents of border crossings, cut to "offset the