

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 We expanded the deduction for medical expenses, and the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act repealed the punitive individual mandate tax penalty at the heart of ObamaCare.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 By zeroing out that unfair penalty, we have repealed a core piece of ObamaCare and restored families' flexibility to choose the health insurance that works for them.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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

costs of Presidential priorities.” What an absurd proposition.

Security experts have testified for decades that effective border security includes a variety of technologies and resources, drones, infrared sensors, Customs and Border Patrol agents, and officers. In some places, secure fence is appropriate. We agree with that. These were all ideas included in comprehensive immigration reform. That the Trump administration would cannibalize funding for these smart border security measures to pay for a wall that will not work makes no sense.

He said he campaigned on it. Oh, no, Mr. President. You campaigned on a wall that Mexico would pay for. We are waiting, but, again, to take away the things that are needed to protect the border for a symbolic and ineffective political gesture is wrong. There is nothing to this than politics. President Trump is fighting for an empty symbol rather than smart policy that will actually produce better security at our borders. We Democrats are willing, able, and eager to work with our Republican colleagues and the administration on smart, effective border solutions.

As I have said, there may be a few defined places where a secure fence makes sense, but a medieval wall that you can't see through across the length of the southern border will not make us any safer. Walls can be scaled over. Walls can be tunneled under. There are, as I have been told, many tunnels under the wall in San Diego, some of which have not been detected.

There is also the issue of eminent domain. The Federal Government would have to conscript hundreds of square miles of land from American citizens to build a wall. The administration still hasn't produced plans for where to put it, and, of course, President Trump promised, once again, that Mexico would pay for it, not taxpayers. If you can read anything into the election, it was for that. The polling data shows the majority of Americans don't believe the wall is the right thing to do.

It is not responsible to insist that American taxpayers pay for an absurdly expensive and ineffective border wall or else the government shuts down. If the President goes down that path and insists on the wall or shuts down the government, which he said back in September, make no mistake about it, a government shutdown will fall entirely on his shoulders.

If President Trump can find a way to get Mexico to pay for the wall, while American taxpayers pay for things that really make a difference to secure the border, he should reveal that to the American people. Until that time, Democrats will work with our Republican colleagues on smart border security, effective border security, just as we fight to protect the Dreamers.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Jan. 8, 2018]
TO PAY FOR WALL; TRUMP WOULD CUT
PROVEN BORDER SECURITY MEASURES
(By Ron Nixon)

The Trump administration would cut or delay funding for border surveillance, radar technology, patrol boats and customs agents in its upcoming spending plan to curb illegal immigration—all proven security measures that officials and experts have said are more effective than building a wall along the Mexican border.

President Trump has made the border wall a focus of his campaign against illegal immigration to stop drugs, terrorists and gangs like MS-13 from coming into the United States. Under spending plans submitted last week to Congress, the wall would cost \$18 billion over the next 10 years, and be erected along nearly 900 miles of the southern border.

The wall also has become a bargaining chip in negotiations with Congress as lawmakers seek to prevent nearly 800,000 young undocumented immigrants from being deported.

But security experts said the president's focus on a border wall ignores the constantly evolving nature of terrorism, immigration and drug trafficking.

“People that are dealing with this issue know that a third-century solution to a 21st-century problem is not going to fix this long-term,” said Representative Will Hurd, Republican of Texas and a former C.I.A. officer. Mr. Hurd, whose district includes more than 800 miles of border territory with Mexico, has pushed for more funding for sensors and other border security technologies.

Homeland Security officials have long and frequently described border security as a holistic system, made up not just of walls and fencing but also patrol routes, lighting, cameras, sensors and personnel.

David Bier, a policy analyst with the Cato Institute, said a border wall would do little to stop the drug trade. Most of the cocaine, heroin and methamphetamines smuggled into the United States come through legal ports of entry rather than areas that would be stopped by a wall, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Nor would a wall stop illegal immigration, other experts said. Data from the Department of Homeland Security and research groups like the New York-based Center for Migration Studies show that most undocumented immigrants now simply overstay legally obtained short-term visas—and did not sneak across the border.

“So unless the wall is 35,000 feet high, it's not going to do much to stop those overstaying these visas,” said Robert Warren, a fellow at the Center for Migration Studies who has worked on immigration issues for Republican and Democratic presidents.

Additionally, Mr. Warren said, many people who have been stopped by the Border Patrol in recent years are seeking asylum—including some who simply walk up to agents and surrender.

Mr. Trump's budget request for a wall represents more than half of the \$33 billion spending blueprint for border security over the next decade. It either eliminates critical funding for border security programs or shifts money from them, threatening to leave gaping holes. A Government Accountability Office study released last February found that Customs and Border Protection has not shown how much fencing and walls bolster border security.

An internal budget guidance document for the 2019 fiscal year shows that the White House Office of Management and Budget asked officials at the Homeland Security Department to reduce or delay funding requests for additional border security technology

and equipment. Instead, the document instructed, Homeland Security should dramatically increase funding for a wall on the Mexico border.

Homeland Security officials said the plans are subject to change. Still, the document underscores the priority that a border wall remains for Mr. Trump, who promised its construction during his presidential campaign. It also instructed the department to seek \$1.6 billion in the upcoming fiscal year to build 74 miles of a border wall—about \$700 million more than Homeland Security officials felt they needed to build that.

Parts of the document were viewed by The New York Times; the rest of it was based on reports by the Democratic staff of the Senate Homeland Security Committee.

The cuts include money for a remote video surveillance system in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas, an area known for high numbers of border crossings and drug smuggling. The system is composed of infrared cameras mounted on poles, towers and buildings, allowing Border Patrol agents to track attempted smuggling and border crossings.

In the internal document, the White House budget office called the surveillance system important but said its funding requests were lowered “to offset the costs of presidential priorities not funded in the D.H.S. request.”

Customs and Border Protection faces several cuts.

Its \$7.9 million request for technology upgrades to its P-3 surveillance aircraft—which operates thousands of miles beyond American borders to track narcotics being shipped from Colombia, Peru and other drug-producing countries—was denied. In 2016, the latest data available, the P-3 aircrews contributed to 145 drug seizures, helping American and foreign authorities capture a combined 34,108 pounds of marijuana and 193,197 pounds of cocaine.

The internal document also suggested delaying a request to buy 15 new Coastal Interceptor boats to catch drug smugglers. The agency had sought nearly \$15 million to replace its aging fleet to keep up with drug smugglers' smaller, faster boats.

It also would cut nearly 200 of the 500 canine units that customs officials say play a key role in programs to prevent terrorism and drug smuggling. The dogs' handlers would then be reassigned to ports on the southwest border to help with staffing shortages.

“The lack of funding and the elimination of the canine teams is shortsighted and poses a serious threat to border security,” said Tony Reardon, the president of the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents customs officers. “If you are going to focus on border security, you can't do that without talking about the men and women who man these ports of entry.”

Perhaps most significantly, the proposed budget would not fund the hiring of new customs officers—the agents who denied 200,000 people from entering the United States at ports of entry in fiscal 2017 and who stopped 600,000 pounds of drugs, including cocaine, heroin, meth and fentanyl. Customs officers also intercepted nearly \$70 million in illicit currency, much of it headed back across the border to fill the coffers of Mexican drug cartels.

Experts said the absence of hiring funds could potentially have the most impact on border security; the agents form a crucial line of defense against smugglers and terrorist threats. An internal Customs and Border Protection review showed that the agency's ranks were about 3,700 officers below required levels, according to the National Treasury Employees Union.

By comparison, Mr. Trump has called for hiring 5,000 additional Border Patrol agents

and 10,000 new Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.

"A wall is the single most expensive thing you can do in terms of trying to secure the border, and not necessarily the most effective on its own," said Doris Meissner, who was the top immigration official during the Clinton administration. "If you want to be strategic about it, you want to invest in technologies and programs that can stop threats well before they can actually get to the border."

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

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. CORNYN. 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.

TAX REFORM

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, just over 2 weeks ago, President Trump signed a historic tax reform bill into law. Some, not really knowing what was in the bill and people who were determined to find fault with it, were let's just say a little skeptical at first. They wondered what this whole thing was about and who would actually benefit. But now the verdict is starting to come in. Many folks are pleasantly surprised, for the first time in a while, knowing that Congress and Washington, DC, actually have produced something that will make their lives better. They are appreciative because they are seeing the immediate consequences. In response, more than 100 companies have announced they will give wage increases, they will increase their charitable contributions, and they will give bonuses to their employees. One million Americans are receiving money they previously didn't have, thanks to passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

But it is not just about bonuses, of course. We expect that once the IRS updates its withholding tables, wages will rise, too, take-home pay will go up, and hopefully people will see that in their paychecks in February. As my colleague the junior Senator from Ohio wrote last week, "With this tax reform, the proof will be in your paycheck." Families can spend that extra money any way they wish, of course. That is the point. They can spend it on projects long delayed. They can spend it on their kids. They can give it as an allowance or some modest compensation for chores performed or apply it to their kids' future education, or people may just figure out they want to save for a rainy day. The number is pretty shocking as far as how many Americans are living paycheck to paycheck and cannot sustain a \$400 loss in income and make things work for them. So this will provide them, if they wish, a little bit of cushion for a rainy day. They can donate it to their house of

worship. They can help a neighbor or a friend who has fallen on hard times.

In some places, we are learning that families will enjoy lower utility rates based on what gas and electric companies are doing for their residential customers in light of their new tax savings. In places such as Michigan, Montana, Minnesota, Kansas, Kentucky, South Dakota, and Arizona, the utility regulators in those States are looking at the tax reduction of those investor-owned utilities and how that will calculate into the rate of return that they are guaranteed under the law. But it looks to me as if it will be good news for consumers, that lower heating bills will be the result during the chilly times of the year and lower air-conditioning costs and other electricity costs when spring and summer come around. So it is encouraging to see this sort of perhaps unexpected consequence of tax reform but one that will directly benefit consumers.

This is real, it is significant, and it is like priming our economic pump—a little push here and a pull there because of tax reform, and all of a sudden, the entire engine of the American economy is chugging along and will soon be running at full speed.

In Texas, you can hear the economy humming along healthily, and we should listen. We should listen to the voices of the job creators like one in New Braunfels, which is between Austin and San Antonio. It is called Rush Enterprises. Rush Enterprises specializes in commercial vehicles. It reported last month that it planned to give each of its 6,600 employees a \$1,000 bonus after President Trump signed the tax reform into law—\$1,000 each to 6,600 employees. The chief financial officer of Rush Enterprises talked about the additional savings the company would incur as a result of the reduction in its tax rate, which fell from 35 percent to 21 percent. He said:

You've got a choice. We could've kept it and stuffed it in the company bank account or coffers, or we can share it with the people. We chose to share it with the people because it's the right thing to do.

Well, I couldn't be prouder of that demonstration of the great Texas spirit—employers paying it forward.

This gentleman went on to say that his company believes tax reform will be beneficial not only for his office and his employees but also for his community and for overall economic growth. To him, it is about the bigger picture.

New Braunfels, though, isn't the only place where companies are paying it forward. A telecom giant, AT&T, headquartered in Dallas, TX, and two prominent airlines—American Airlines and Southwest Airlines—have responded in similar fashion, offering large bonuses to hundreds of thousands of their employees and promising to make significant capital investments in the future and update their fleet of aircraft—all with the savings they will incur as a result of this Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

Meanwhile, a restaurant company that owns a chain of popular steakhouses in Texas and elsewhere has announced it will use its savings from lower rates—about \$70 million—to improve customer service and to provide additional benefits to its employees. The restaurants will be spending a significant amount of money to make sure the dining experience is more worthwhile, hopefully providing not only jobs to the people who prepare the food but those who serve it and the vendors who sell it. Not only will this legislation have the effect of improving a waiter's and waitress' salary, but I think this demonstrates once again how the impact of tax reform is far-reaching, perhaps in ways we really didn't necessarily think about. But this is what happens when people get to keep more of the money they earn. They spend it in a way that improves their quality of life and improves their economic security.

In Texas, our economy hopefully will continue its steady ascent. In its annual economic freedom index, an organization called the Fraser Institute just ranked Texas as No. 2 in the country. I am not too happy about that. We don't like being No. 2 in anything. But we have been in the top five of this list for 11 straight years, and it has been because of our lower taxes, our fiscally conservative approach to spending, and our commonsense approach to regulation that makes it easier for investors and entrepreneurs to succeed. When they succeed, that means more jobs are created and people can do the work that provides them the means to support their family and improve their quality of life. We call that the Texas model. Although it is not particularly unique, you would think it would be common sense. But as they say, here in Washington, DC, common sense is not all that common.

Nationally, the situation is looking up, too, in part because the Trump administration shares this Texas approach. The U.S. economy added 2 million jobs in 2017, and unemployment is at a 17-year low. Consumer confidence is at an alltime high since it was first recorded—I believe it was about 16 years ago. Over the last two quarters, the economy has grown by more than 3 percent. That is up from roughly 1.9 percent during the previous administration. People are excited to see the economy continue to improve in 2018 thanks to tax cuts and other regulatory reform and a government that is no longer hostile to private business and job creation.

I am glad to hear how many positive steps have been taken over the past few weeks in response to tax reform, but it is early. As I pointed out, it has only been a couple of weeks. I look forward to hearing many more such stories in the days ahead.

I intend to spend this next year, when I travel around the State of Texas, looking for the small businesses and individuals who benefit from this