

three of those components of what makes up smart and sensible border security.

I am also happy to see that the initial demands made by our colleagues across the aisle that we limit the number of detention beds are not in this bill and that law enforcement can continue to detain people with criminal records who happen to be illegally in this country so that we can discourage and deter further illegal immigration.

One of the worst aspects of our broken immigration system is this notion of catch-and-release. During the George W. Bush administration, I remember talking to Secretary Chertoff about this huge upsurge in Brazilians coming across our border. I asked Secretary Chertoff why we were seeing all these Brazilians coming. He said it was catch-and-release. They knew that if there were no penalty associated with coming across or if they wouldn't be detained, there was no deterrence.

I am glad to see that this appropriations bill, which will prevent another government shutdown, contains no cap on detention beds to detain criminal aliens and others who are exploiting vulnerabilities in our immigration system.

I would say, though, one of the things that is notably absent in this bill is an extension of the Violence Against Women Act, which provides resources to assist women who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Republicans made absolutely clear from the get-go that we wanted to extend the current law. I am incredulous that our Democratic colleagues objected to extending the current law, the Violence Against Women Act.

It is really hard for me to believe that Speaker PELOSI and House Democrats object to a modest extension of this critical legislation, which helped countless victims receive the support they need, but because of the political jockeying, the Violence Against Women Act will expire at midnight tomorrow. There were two options available to us. One was to provide an extension through the end of the fiscal year—through the end of September—which would have allowed us to work on a long-term reauthorization under regular order. The second option, which our Democratic colleagues chose, is to do nothing and let this important legislation expire while trying to plot out a long-term plan. The choice seemed pretty obvious to me, but apparently not to Speaker PELOSI and not to the Democratic leader here in the Senate.

Since my days as attorney general, I have long been a believer in advocating for victims' rights. I am beyond disappointed that we have ended up in this situation. It is shameful to play politics with the Violence Against Women Act. But because of their obstruction, this important resource for victims across the country will lapse tomorrow night at midnight.

THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Mr. President, we have seen a lot of discussion lately about the so-called Green New Deal. It has been stealing headlines and capturing people's imaginations. It has been the subject of a lot of social media interaction and certainly has had a lot of coverage on TV and in the papers.

It has ended up causing quite a headache for our colleagues across the aisle who have tried to explain exactly what they are trying to do and how they are trying to do it. Last week, the junior Senator from Massachusetts introduced with Congresswoman OCASIO-CORTEZ of New York a resolution that was framed as a way to create jobs and fight climate change. A number of Presidential aspirants here in the Senate—and there are a lot—quickly embraced this resolution.

If you lived in a vacuum and you saw only the text of the resolution, you might say: Well, this is a pretty good idea. It mentions things like creating high-wage jobs, ensuring economic prosperity, investing in infrastructure and industry, and securing clean air and water for all. That sounds pretty good. But the resolution does not spell out how we are supposed to achieve all of those things.

Fortunately, one of the authors released a summary, which, oddly enough, provided more details on what the Green New Deal strives to do. It tells us more than the actual resolution does. One of the lines of the resolution says to ensure “prosperity and economic security for all people of the United States.” But the summary clarifies that this is, in reality, a new entitlement program on steroids. This, at a time when our national debt just hit \$22 trillion, adds additional entitlement spending on top of it.

This provision would guarantee every person in the United States a job, healthcare, education, healthy food, and paid vacations. They might have thrown in free beer and pizza too. But they take it even a step further. According to the Green New Deal, the government will foot the bill for any person who is “unable or unwilling to work.” If you don't like your job, don't want to get out of bed in the morning, don't feel like going to the office today, no worries. The Green New Deal says you don't have to go to work. And the people who do go to work—the hard-working taxpayers of America—will foot the bill.

Another component of this Green New Deal is to move to 100 percent clean and renewable energy in just 10 years. I come from an energy State, the State of Texas. When people think about Texas, they think about oil and gas, but we actually believe in all of the above. We generate more electricity from wind than any other State in the country because we have more infrastructure deployed for that.

I actually think moving toward cleaner and renewable energy is a good thing. But they want to do it in 10

years, and they don't answer the question about how much it will cost. Some estimates put the pricetag at \$5.7 trillion. That is \$2 trillion more than our annual tax revenue. In other words, it would add \$3.7 trillion to the national debt.

Remember, that is just for the energy portion of the Green New Deal. There are other components, as well. There is Medicare for All, which, of course, would destroy the private insurance industry and employer-provided coverage and would be unaffordable. They offer free college, paying the way for people who are able but don't want to work.

This is an extraordinary wish list, combining the most costly ideas of the radical fringes on the left in one place. It is really remarkable they were able to condense all of these into one place, where we could understand the entire picture.

The resolution also commits to update “all existing buildings . . . to achieve maximal energy efficiency, water efficiency, safety, affordability, comfort, and durability.” I am all for local and State government and, where it is appropriate, Federal Government to talk about building codes and energy efficiency. That is a desirable thing. But to try to retrofit every government building, every airport, every football stadium, every home, every grocery store, and every shopping mall—every single building in the United States would have to be updated. How crazy is that? How much would that cost?

On second thought, I guess we don't have to worry about updating airports because the Green New Deal also calls for building “high-speed rail at a scale where air travel stops becoming necessary.” I saw an interview with our friend the Senator from Hawaii, who was asked about that component of the Green New Deal. She said: Well, that wouldn't work very well for Hawaii. High-speed rail wouldn't exactly get you from the west coast out to Hawaii.

I hate to burst their bubble, but this is not something that is feasible or easy to do. Look at California talking about high-speed rail. Earlier this week, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced the State was hitting the brakes on a high-speed rail project because it would take too long and cost too much. I bet Governor Newsom and I don't agree on a lot from a political standpoint, but I agree with him on that.

Last March, California estimated that the project would cost between \$77 and \$98 billion, and that is just to connect Northern and Southern California. I can't imagine how much it would cost to build a high-speed rail to connect California to Maine. If the word “green” refers to the amount of money this would cost, then at least that point is accurate.

There are no details on how we are going to pay for all of this, of course, because our Democratic colleagues know that the Green New Deal is entirely fantasy—it is unrealistic. These

are just talking points that have been designed to appeal to the fringe of their political party and to make a political statement. That is why a number of our colleagues on the Democratic side changed their tune once the majority leader announced that the Senate would vote on this resolution.

Generally speaking, in my experience in the Senate, if you introduce a bill or a resolution, you are thrilled to hear the majority leader say he is going to schedule it for a vote on the floor—but not the Senator from Massachusetts, one of the proponents of the Green New Deal. Following the leader's announcement, he released a statement that derided Senator MCCONNELL's effort to "sabotage" the Green New Deal by his giving them a vote on their resolution. Apparently, holding a vote on something you have introduced is now a form of sabotage in this wild and wacky world in which we currently live. The Senator from Minnesota, who announced her bid for President, later downplayed her support and brushed it all off as aspirational.

Our constituents didn't send us to Washington to advocate for partisan wish lists that will never be voted on. They want us to be accountable as their elected Representatives. They sent us here to craft legislation that can and will make our country stronger. This Green New Deal is nothing more than a Socialist agenda that is being disguised as feel-good environmental policy, and it is indicative, unfortunately, of the hard left turn our friends across the aisle, the Democratic Party, have taken.

The Green New Deal is not what our country needs, and as we have heard from both Republicans and Democrats over the last several days, it is not what our country wants.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, later today, we hope we will have an opportunity to vote on legislation that will fund the government and provide much needed support for border security. While no agreement is perfect and not everybody gets everything one wants, this makes a significant downpayment on a border wall as well as on other border security measures. At the same time, it funds all of the appropriations bills for this fiscal year.

I hope, as our Members review the text, they will have an opportunity to conclude that we will be able to get the votes that will be necessary to move the legislation through the Senate and, hopefully, ultimately, through the House and to the President and that

the President will be able to sign it into law. So stay tuned on that. Hopefully, that will all transpire later today.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, tax reform is working. When Republicans took office 2 years ago, we had one goal in mind, and that was to make life better for the American people. Key to that goal was getting our economy going again after years of economic stagnation under the Obama administration. We took action to lift burdensome regulations, and in December of 2017, we passed the historic, comprehensive reform of our Nation's Tax Code.

Why the Tax Code?

Well, the Tax Code plays a huge role in the health of our economy. It helps to determine how much money individuals and families have to spend and to save. It helps to determine whether a small business can expand and hire. It helps to determine whether larger businesses hire, invest, and stay in the United States. A small business owner who faces a huge tax bill is highly unlikely to be able to expand her business or to hire a new employee. A larger business is going to find it hard to create jobs or to improve benefits for employees if it is struggling to stay competitive against foreign businesses that pay much less in taxes. A larger business is also unlikely to keep jobs and investment in the United States if the Tax Code makes it vastly more expensive to hire American workers.

Before we passed tax reform a year ago in December, our Tax Code was not helping our economy. It was taking way too much money from American families, and it was making it harder for businesses, large and small, to create jobs, increase wages, and grow. That is why, after months of work, we passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

This legislation cut tax rates for American families, doubled the child tax credit, and nearly doubled the standard deduction. It lowered tax rates across the board for owners of small- and medium-sized businesses, farms, and ranches. It lowered our Nation's massive corporate tax rate, which, up until January 1 of last year, was the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world. It expanded business owners' ability to recover the costs of the investments they make in their businesses, which frees up cash that they can reinvest in their operations and in their workers. It also brought the U.S. international tax system into the 21st century so that American businesses would not be operating at a competitive disadvantage next to their foreign counterparts.

I am proud to report that the Republicans' economic policies are working. Our economy is thriving. The economy grew at a robust 3.4 percent in the third quarter of 2018. January marked the 11th straight month that unemployment has been at or below 4 percent. That is the longest streak in nearly five decades. The number of job

openings hit a record high in December. Once again, there were more job openings than job seekers. In fact, job openings outnumbered job seekers by more than a million jobs. Think about that. There are more job openings than there are people who are looking for work. It is not just by a little but by a lot—by a million job openings.

The Department of Labor reports that the number of job openings has outnumbered the number of job seekers now for 10 straight months. Wage growth has accelerated. Wages have now been growing at a rate of 3 percent or greater for 6 straight months. The last time wage growth reached this level was in 2009—a decade ago.

A Bloomberg article from yesterday reported:

A strong labor market is proving to be [a] blessing for job switchers as they pocket bigger raises amid record openings. Median wage growth for those who jumped to new positions picked up to 4.6 percent in January from a year earlier—the fastest pace since October of 2007.

Median household income is at an all-time, inflation-adjusted high of \$61,372, and the list goes on.

These are a lot of statistics, but behind those numbers are American families whose lives are improving, thanks to Republican economic policies—American families who no longer have to choose between a car repair and a dentist's bill; American families who now have a little extra every month to put away for the kids' college or for their retirement. Thanks to Republican economic policies, Americans are feeling more optimistic and more hopeful about their futures.

Gallup reports: "Americans' optimism about their personal finances has climbed to levels not seen in more than 16 years, with 69 percent now saying they expect to be financially better off 'at this time next year.'"

There are 57 percent of Americans who "rate the economy as excellent or good," according to Gallup, which is the highest level since January of 2001.

There are 69 percent of Americans who say that now is a good time to find a quality job, which is the highest percentage that Gallup has ever recorded.

There is optimism in this country. There is optimism within families, and there is optimism within small businesses. There is optimism at every level when it comes to this economy and the jobs and the wages that are being created as a result of these economic policies.

When it came time to draft tax reform, we had hoped it could have been a bipartisan endeavor. After all, many of the ideas that we included were the product of both Republican and Democratic proposals. As someone who has been around tax policy for a number of years and had served as a member of the Senate Finance Committee when tax reform was written, I have seen many of the bills that have been introduced.

A few years ago, I led a task force that took ideas from both sides and incorporated them into a document that