

2018, if we use the measure that economists prefer, the news is even better—3.1 percent growth from the fourth quarter of 2017 to the fourth quarter of 2018. This is just more evidence that Republican economic policies are working.

We lifted burdensome regulations and passed a comprehensive reform of our Tax Code to put more money in Americans' pockets and make it easier for businesses to grow and expand jobs. Now we are seeing the effects.

Unemployment is low. 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, and, once again, there were more job openings than job seekers. 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. Median household income is at an all-time, inflation-adjusted record of \$61,372. The list goes on.

What does all of this mean? It means more money in American families' bank accounts, more jobs and opportunities for American workers, more Americans feeling hopeful about their future.

Republican economic policies are making life better for American families, which is why it is particularly disturbing that Democrats are currently advancing policies that would not only destroy the economic progress we have made but would severely damage our economy for the long term.

THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Madam President, yesterday, I came down and talked about the so-called Green New Deal, which is a fantasy put forward by a number of our colleagues on the other side. I think 11 Democratic Senators have cosponsored that legislation, which the early analysis shows would cost somewhere between \$51 trillion and \$94 trillion over the next decade. To put that into more personal terms, that is \$600,000 per family in this country—the cost of the Green New Deal.

My colleague from Illinois, the Democratic whip, was asked about it on an interview recently, and he responded by saying that he had read and reread the proposal and still doesn't know what the heck it is. Well, that is an honest answer. But I think what we do know is that this is a proposal that will dramatically, massively drive up costs for American families. It would be a disaster for the pocketbooks of the people of this country, which brings me to my topic for today.

On Tuesday, POLITICO released an article with this headline: "House Democrats to release 'Medicare for All' bill—without a price tag." That was the headline.

This is becoming par for the course for Democrats. First we get the Green New Deal resolution without a

pricetag. Now we get Medicare for All, also without a pricetag. Why? Well, because there is no way to actually pay for these socialist fantasies. They sound nice, until you actually look at the staggering costs.

Imagine if you decided that you needed to repair the plumbing at your house, and the plumber came and suggested that not only should you repair the plumbing, you should rebuild the house from the ground up. Then he wanted you to sign on for demolition and reconstruction without telling you how much it would cost.

That is what Democrats are trying to do on a grand scale here. They want to overhaul large parts of the economy and rebuild them on socialist lines, all without telling you what it will cost or how they will pay for it.

Of course, while it is irresponsible, it is not surprising that Democrats don't want to discuss the pricetag for their fantasies, because there is no way to pay for these massive government takeovers without taxing ordinary Americans.

Democrats make vague suggestions that these programs can be paid for by taxing the rich. That is always the line. But the truth is that taxing millionaires at a 100-percent income tax rate would not pay for these programs. Taxing Americans making much less than \$1 million at a 100-percent rate wouldn't pay for these programs.

The cost of these programs will never be borne just by millionaires. These programs will be paid for on the backs of working families in this country. That is the pure and simple reality.

A left-leaning think tank modeled a version of the Medicare for All plan proposed by the junior Senator from Vermont and found that it would cost a staggering \$32 trillion over 10 years—\$32 trillion—and it is possible that the House Democrats' plan could cost even more.

POLITICO noted in their story that, unlike the plan of the Senator from Vermont, the House Democrats' plan would also "fund long-term care, a particularly expensive part of the health system."

But moving away from the staggering pricetag, let's talk about what life would be like under Medicare for All.

For starters, of course, it would mean that Americans would lose their private insurance, even if they like their private insurance. Democrats have been very clear about this.

At a CNN townhall just this week, the junior Senator from Vermont was asked, "Will these people be able to keep their health insurance plans, their private plans through their employers, if there is a Medicare for All program that you endorse?"

The Senator from Vermont's response: "No."

Another Democratic candidate for President, the junior Senator from New York, was recently asked:

Should ending private insurance, as we know it, be a Democratic . . . goal, and do you think it's an urgent goal?

Her response:

Oh yeah, it is a goal. An urgent goal.

So if you like your health insurance, you definitely will not be able to keep it. You will be forced into the government healthcare plan, whether you like that plan or not. Then, of course, you will be facing long wait times and likely a limited choice of doctors and hospitals, and you will have fewer options if the government decides a particular treatment isn't cost-effective and shouldn't be covered.

Democrats can talk all they want about generous coverage, but what happens when they don't have the money for that generous coverage? We already know this program is likely to cost more than \$30 trillion over just 10 years, and government programs aren't exactly known for staying under budget.

What happens if it ends up costing more or if the government can't even pay the \$32 trillion that we know it is going to cost? Well, there will be still more taxes, undoubtedly, but also reductions in coverage and care.

Our Nation's current Medicare Program is going bankrupt. If action isn't taken, in 2026 Medicare will not be able to pay the benefits that are promised under current law. Yet Democrats are suggesting that we more than quintuple the size of the program and that somehow we will be able to pay for that.

If we ever do pay for Medicare for All, we will pay for it by taking the money from the American people through devastating tax increases that will permanently reduce Americans' standard of living and permanently damage our economy.

Like all socialist dreams, Medicare for All would quickly become a nightmare for the American people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

(The remarks of Senator UDALL and Senator COLLINS pertaining to the submission of S.J. Res. 10 are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Ms. COLLINS. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The clerk will call the roll.

The 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.

(The remarks of Mr. SCHUMER pertaining to the introduction of S.J. Res. 9 are printed in today's RECORD under

“Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now I want to address two more issues related to this topic.

First, are the reports that the President is planning to create a panel of cherry-picked scientists who question the severity of climate change to “counter” the scientific consensus. I mentioned these reports earlier this week, but I want to update my friends in this Chamber that Democrats are in the process of preparing legislation that would defund this fake climate panel. We hope this legislation, like our resolution, will eventually be bipartisan because it shouldn’t be partisan to oppose a group of handpicked climate deniers spreading the fossil fuel industry’s propaganda under the imprimatur of the White House. It shouldn’t be partisan to oppose the administration’s setting up its own Orwellian Ministry of Truth on climate change.

So I urge my friends on the other side of the aisle who believe in climate science to sign on to our legislation once we have it ready.

NOMINATION OF ANDREW WHEELER

Mr. President, second is the nomination of Andrew Wheeler to be the next Administrator of the EPA—a question currently before the Senate. I opposed Mr. Wheeler’s nomination to be the Deputy Administrator, and I will oppose his nomination to be Administrator as well.

I opposed Mr. Wheeler initially because I thought his career as a lobbyist working on behalf of big polluters and climate deniers was exactly the wrong kind of experience for a job at the EPA, the Environmental Protection Agency. He spent most of his career lobbying against the same environmental protections he now oversees, and his time at the EPA has done little to assuage my original concerns.

Mr. Wheeler has failed to take meaningful action on toxic chemicals, including the chemical PFAS, which has plagued my home State. He has downplayed the severity of climate change and undermined several EPA programs that seek to address it, including the regulation of poisonous mercury from powerplants, efforts to reduce carbon emissions from cars and trucks, as well as replacing the Clean Power Plan.

At a time when climate change is the No. 1 threat facing our planet, installing a man such as Mr. Wheeler as permanent Administrator of the EPA—the Environmental Protection Agency—is the wrong thing to do.

So as I said earlier this morning, Leader McConnell’s move to bring the Green New Deal forward is nothing more than a stunt, but one of the great and positive ironies is that, finally, folks are talking about climate change again, more than at any time I can think of under this Republican majority.

If and when Leader McConnell brings his version of the Green New Deal forward for a vote, we will demand that Republicans first answer the core questions on climate change.

Again, three simple things: Do you believe climate change is real and happening? Do you believe human activity contributes to it? Do you believe Congress must act to address this pressing challenge?

If Leader McConnell and my Republican friends can’t answer those three questions—run away from them—the American people will see right through the ploy. The American people will see that Leader McConnell and his party stand against science and against facts, ostriches with their heads buried in the sand as the tide swiftly comes in.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, our Democratic leader has set three plain and very obvious questions about fossil fuel-burning carbon emissions and climate change that should be easily answered by every single Member of the Senate, and the fact that this is a problem is a clear indication of fossil fuel influence in this body—the regrettable extent of fossil fuel influence in this body.

It was not always this way. Here is a letter that a number of us came to the floor to talk about yesterday. The letter was written December 23, 1986. There had been hearings on climate change in the Environment and Public Works Committee, and a bipartisan group of Senators wanted some answers. They wrote this letter to what then existed, an Office of Technology Assessment for the Congress, inquiring about how serious they felt this was and what could be done about it, signed by Senator Stafford, Senator Chafee, Senator Durenberger, and three Democrats in 1986. I do not believe that a Republican Senator could be found to sign this letter today.

I got here in 2007, and for that year, and in 2008 and 2009, we had multiple bipartisan climate bills being discussed in this body. Over and over again, there were a Democrat and Republican who got together and worked to try to solve the climate problem—more than a decade ago. We have seen bipartisanship on this issue.

We have even seen, in 2009, this New York Times full-page advertisement signed by Donald J. Trump, which said that the science of climate change is “scientifically irrefutable.” Those were his words, not mine, in 2009, which said that if we don’t act there would be “catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet”—his words, not mine. That was 1986, that was 2007, and this was 2009.

Then something happened. Citizens United got decided by the Supreme Court or, to be fair to the Supreme Court, Citizens United got decided by five Republican appointees on the Supreme Court.

In my view, the fossil fuel industry asked for that decision, predicted that decision, and they were off like a sprinter at the gun when they got that decision. From that moment, all of that bipartisan activity on climate change here in the Senate ended, and it ended because the fossil fuel industry was allowed to spend unlimited money in politics. They found out how to spend unlimited dark money in politics. It is politically obvious that if one can spend unlimited money in politics, one can also threaten to spend unlimited money in politics. So between the unlimited spending and the unlimited, anonymous dark money spending and whatever they did in the way of threats and promises, it has been like a heart attack—flatlined—here in the Senate, since that moment. It is a tragedy.

In fact, if you go back to this letter for a minute, there were six signatories. We couldn’t get six States to come to the floor yesterday because one of these States has two Republican Senators, and we couldn’t get either of them to come to the floor.

I don’t know what has happened to the Republican Party that they can’t take this seriously even now—even as States like Florida are flooding on sunny days, even as States see wildfires they have never seen before, even as farmers are recording drought and flood conditions that are unprecedented, even as my State looks forward to 5 or 6 feet of sea level rise.

And then we got a clue as to what goes on here. This is a letter that was written on behalf of Andrew Wheeler, who is the slightly cleaned-up version of Scott Pruitt and who is pending before us to lead the Environmental Protection Agency. It ought to tell us a lot that the Republicans put up a coal lobbyist to represent the people of America leading the Environmental Protection Agency.

What tells you a lot also is this letter of support for this guy. Who is on it? These are these phony-baloney front group organizations funded by the fossil fuel industry that got together to write this letter:

The Heartland Institute. Koch-affiliated groups gave it \$7.18 million, and \$730,000 came from Exxon. Heartland is such a slippery, slimy group that they compared climate scientists to the Unabomber. That is the company that they travel in.

The Cornwall Alliance. Secret funding—we don’t know, but they are always in this climate-denier fringe crowd. The founder doesn’t believe in evolution. He said that tornadoes are a punishment from God, and that AIDS is punishment for being gay. You are running in great company with them, guys.

FreedomWorks is next. They received \$2.5 million from Koch-affiliated groups, and at least \$130,000 from the American Petroleum Institute.

The Competitive Enterprise Institute is next, with at least \$2 million given from Exxon, and Koch-affiliated groups gave at least \$5.2 million.