

to maintain deep, stable, and liquid mortgage markets, and ensure sustainable access to affordable housing for all Americans.

The Manufactured Housing Institute added:

Without question, Dr. Calabria is well-qualified to lead the effort to strengthen the Nation's housing finance system and ensure access to safe, affordable homeownership alternatives.

It is important to have a Senate-confirmed leader at the FHFA, overseeing our mortgage markets and making sure taxpayers are well protected from another financial crisis.

Dr. Calabria is highly qualified, highly experienced, and well prepared for this new role. I support Dr. Calabria and urge my colleagues to join me in voting yes on his nomination.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

TAX REFORM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, under President Obama, our economy languished. Recovery from the recession was historically slow and economic growth for his last year in office was an anemic 1.6 percent. Of course, all of that meant reduced economic prospects for American families. Wages were stagnant, and jobs and opportunities were often few and far between. Republicans knew that if we wanted to improve life for American families, we needed to get our economy going again.

As soon as we took office in 2017, we got right to work. We knew the biggest thing we had to do was overhaul our outdated Tax Code, which was acting as a major drag on economic growth. The Tax Code has a huge effect on economic growth and the kinds of jobs, wages, and opportunities available to American workers.

A small business owner struggling to afford a heavy tax bill is unlikely to have the money to hire a new worker or expand her business. A larger business is going to find it hard to create jobs or improve benefits for employees if it is struggling to stay competitive against foreign businesses paying much less in taxes.

Prior to the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, our Tax Code was not helping American workers. It was taking too much money from Americans' paychecks. It was making it difficult for businesses to grow and create jobs. So we passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to put more money in Americans' pockets, to spur economic growth, and expand opportunities for American workers. We cut tax rates for American families, doubled the child tax credit, and nearly doubled the standard deduction.

We lowered tax rates across the board for owners of small- and medium-sized businesses, farms, and ranches. We 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.

We expanded business owners' ability to recover the cost of investments that

they make in their businesses, which frees up cash that they can reinvest in their operations and in their workers, and we brought the U.S. international tax system into the 21st century so American businesses are not operating at a competitive disadvantage next to their foreign counterparts.

I am proud to report that the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is doing exactly what it was supposed to do. It is growing our economy. It is creating jobs, and it is expanding benefits and opportunities for American workers. Economic growth from the fourth quarter of 2017 to the fourth quarter of 2018 was a strong 3 percent. The unemployment rate dropped to 3.8 percent in February, the 12th straight month that unemployment has been at or below 4 percent. That is the longest streak in nearly 50 years.

The Department of Labor reports that the number of job openings has exceeded the number of job seekers for 11 straight months. The economy has added more than 5.3 million jobs since President Trump was elected. Job growth has averaged 209,000 jobs a month over the past 12 months, exceeding the 2017 average by 30,000 jobs a month.

Wage growth has accelerated. Wages are growing at a rate of 3.4 percent, the seventh straight month in which wages have grown at a rate of 3 percent or greater. Median household income is at an alltime high. Business investment is up, which means more jobs and opportunities for American workers. U.S. manufacturing is booming; small business hiring recently hit a record high; and the list goes on.

So what is the Democrats' response to tax reform success—continue or expand the policies that have made life better for American families? Well, the answer is no. Instead, Democrats are proposing policies that would result in massive tax hikes on just about every American.

Consider Democrats' Medicare for All proposal, which would strip Americans of their private health insurance. The pricetag for this program is estimated at \$32 trillion over 10 years. To put that number in perspective, the entire Federal budget for 2019 is less than \$5 trillion. Democrats are talking about increasing Federal spending by more than 70 percent. One Medicare expert estimates that doubling the amount of individual and corporate income tax collected in this country would not be enough to cover the cost of Medicare for All. I don't know about my Democratic colleagues, but I don't know too many working families who would be able to afford to have their tax bill double.

While \$32 trillion is an insane pricetag, it is dwarfed by the pricetag for Democrat's comprehensive, socialist fantasy, the Green New Deal. An initial estimate suggests that the Green New Deal would cost \$93 trillion over 10 years—\$93 trillion. That is more money than the 2017 gross domestic

product for the entire world. It is more money than the U.S. government has spent in its entire history.

Democrats like to talk about taxing the rich to pay for various initiatives, but the fact is, there aren't enough rich people in America to even come close to paying for the Green New Deal, even if you taxed every one of these people at a rate of 100 percent.

Democrats' socialist fantasies would be paid for on the backs of working families. Families would face huge tax hikes that would permanently lower their standard of living, but that is not all. Families would also see a steep decline in the jobs and opportunities available to them. Tax reform has enabled and encouraged businesses to invest in and grow, which is resulting in better wages and benefits and increased opportunities for American workers. None of the growth we are seeing from businesses would last under the tax hikes businesses would face to pay for Democrats' socialist fantasies. Instead of thinking about expanding, companies would be thinking about how they could shrink their workforces or move jobs and investments overseas. Instead of raising wages or improving benefits, companies would be avoiding wage hikes and looking to trim their benefit packages.

Under Democrats' socialist fantasies, American families would face a double economic blow: huge tax hikes, fewer jobs, lower wages, and reduced economic opportunity.

There is no one in Congress who doesn't want to make life better for American families. Socialism and the massive tax hikes it would bring is not the answer. Socialism would reduce opportunities for Americans, not expand them; it would decrease Americans' standard of living, not improve it; and it would rob Americans of their choices and many of their freedoms.

Republicans will continue to fight to expand economic opportunity for American families, and we will do everything we can to ensure that hard-working Americans never have to live under the miserable reality of Democrats' socialist fantasies.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 268

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, rather than spend time yesterday on a terribly destructive rules change, Leader McCONNELL could have focused the Senate on an urgent matter that this Chamber has failed to act on: disaster relief.

In a few moments, Senator LEAHY and I will ask unanimous consent to have a vote on a new version of the emergency disaster relief that couldn't get through the Senate earlier this week. Our new amendment offers this Chamber a path forward from this week's impasse. It is a plan that meets everyone's needs. It doesn't say only aid this or only aid that; it recognizes

all American citizens deserve to be helped when disaster strikes.

The amendment Senator LEAHY and I will offer provides \$16.7 billion in relief for Americans struck by natural disasters last year and in the last 2 years. It includes \$2.5 billion in new funding—funding that the bill from the Republican side that failed, offered by Senators Shelby and Perdue, did not have—\$2.5 billion in new funding for the recent flooding in Iowa, Nebraska, and Missouri. We all agree these communities need assistance now. This amendment also crucially includes aid for our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico and other territories. It doesn't say to pick one or to pick the other. It says to do both.

All of us in this Chamber should agree that we must do something now to help all Americans in need. This amendment offers our Republican friends—those who have said we need aid in the Middle West—the opportunity to do just that. So, if this Chamber wants to help families in Nebraska, in Iowa, in Missouri and if we want to help the families of Texas and of Florida, this amendment is the path forward. It is the key to moving forward. This is the solution that has the ability to pass the House. This is the option that has enough support to reach the President's desk. The Speaker of the House has said the original Republican bill wouldn't even have been put on the floor. This bill will.

Now, some will say and, I know, my dear friend from Alabama—and he is my good friend—will say that the President will not sign this. Well, I have something else to say. If my colleagues on the other side pass this measure, the President will dare not veto it. That is my prediction. We all know the President has huffed and puffed about vetoing bills in the past. He has said he would veto “this,” and he has said he would veto “that.” Yet, in most instances, when the Republicans in the Senate have stood up, he has caved. In this case in particular, he will not want to veto legislation that helps Nebraska and Iowa and Missouri and Texas and Florida. So let's not play this game.

We all know what happened. There was a bipartisan agreement. President Trump went to the Republican lunch and said: No aid for Puerto Rico. That is why we are in this mess, but we can change that. It is time to call the President's bluff. Elections have consequences. There is a Democratic House. The time has come for the Republicans of this Chamber and for the Republicans in the House to have a frank conversation with the President about what can and cannot pass the Congress.

If the President cares about farmers in Iowa and Texas and Missouri and all American citizens who have been affected by natural disasters, he will not veto this bill. We know that. The measure we are presenting today isn't some solution that has been cooked up out of

left field; it is a simple proposal. We need disaster relief for all Americans, plain and simple.

Senators LEAHY and SHELBY worked in good faith earlier this year, as they always do, and I appreciate the great relationship our Appropriations Committee chair and ranking member—vice chair—have. It would have worked had the President not gone to that lunch. Who knows why, where, or when he pounded the table and said: No aid to Puerto Rico. He said that, OK? The only problem is when we are at the brink of a compromise, all too often, President Trump torpedoes things, and then the Republicans act powerless. They don't act.

If Leader McCONNELL and the Senate Republicans will not support this measure—a measure that notes the needs of all affected Americans—then what is their plan that can pass the House and pass the Senate and go to the President's desk?

If this measure just had aid to Puerto Rico and not to the Middle West, the President might veto it, but he is not going to veto a bill that gives aid to the Middle West nor should he.

So, if an “all of the above” solution will not work, what on Earth will?

So far, the answer from this Chamber on the other side seems to be nothing—none of the above. That doesn't make sense. This is an emergency. People are suffering. People can't get back into their homes. Small businesses need help starting up again. This is not the time to duck, to look for cover, to know when the President has done something sort of wrongly and seemingly on a whim to just bow to what he says. We should agree on the need to do something now to help communities that are recovering from natural disasters. Our amendment offers the Republicans the opportunity to do just that.

Nobody—no Member of this body—should pick and choose which American citizens get help in times of crises. It is a profound shame that my colleagues on the other side, thus far, have allowed the President to derail this process and have gone along with appeasing him. I say the power of this Chamber is greater than they realize. If we vote on this package and if it passes the Senate and if it passes the House and reaches the President's desk, the President will sign it. He will not follow through on a veto threat even if he knows that doing so will be a profound betrayal of his promise to look after the well-being of all Americans.

I urge the Senators to support our amendment today that gives aid to the Middle West, to the South—those from Florida to Texas—and to the people of Puerto Rico.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that as in legislative session, the Senate resume consideration of H.R. 268; that all pending amendments be withdrawn; that Leahy amendment No. 246 be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; and that the motions to recon-

sider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, these unanimous consent requests are political and, I believe, are not productive at the moment. We know that for two reasons.

First, earlier this week, my Democratic colleagues rejected a disaster assistance package that contained assistance for the Midwest. Instead, they supported a different version that did nothing for folks in Iowa, in Nebraska, and in other States who have been the victims of catastrophic flooding. In fact, if the Democrats had gotten their way the other night, their bill would have gone straight to the President's desk.

That brings me to the second reason these procedural requests are empty gestures. My Democratic colleagues know that the measure they raise today does not have the President's support, not unlike the bill they supported earlier this week. Those measures cannot secure the President's signature.

My Democratic colleagues have regrouped today and have decided to provide assistance to the folks in the Midwest—the same folks they left stranded earlier in the week. Yet they are willing to help the Midwest only if Puerto Rico gets billions more in Federal assistance—billions more they cannot justify right now.

Look, we all want to help the people of Puerto Rico, and I know the Presiding Officer has been deeply involved in this. Congress, in its recognition of those needs, has already committed significant resources to the island. In fact, Puerto Rico is eligible for more than \$90 billion in funding from the previous supplemental.

For example, FEMA estimates that Puerto Rico will be eligible to receive more than \$60 billion from the Disaster Relief Fund as a result of the 2017 storms; yet Puerto Rico has only spent approximately \$10 billion of this amount thus far.

Another example is Congress has approved \$20 billion in Community Development Block Grant—or CDBG—funding for Puerto Rico—\$20 billion.

In February 2018, the Department of Housing and Urban Development allocated \$1.5 billion of this amount to the island; yet more than a year later, it has spent only \$42,000 out of the \$1.5 billion allocation. Still, HUD allocated another \$8.2 billion just over a month ago. In addition, Puerto Rico has been granted an enormous amount of flexibility to expend these resources.

FEMA used its administrative authority to extend the 100-percent Federal cost share for emergency work in Puerto Rico longer than it has for any

other disaster in more than 10 years, and not once has FEMA denied Puerto Rico access to funding on the basis of its ability to provide its own share of the costs when required. More importantly, even if cost share were an issue, which I don't believe it is, Puerto Rico could use its ample CDBG funding to meet any cost share requirement.

However, it does not appear that access to resources for cost share is actually an issue in Puerto Rico. According to the Treasury Department, Puerto Rico has billions of dollars in unrestricted cash on hand. In fact, the Treasury Department reports it has \$5.6 billion in unrestricted cash, to be precise. What is more, the land of Puerto Rico continues to collect tens—if not hundreds—of millions of dollars a month because revenues are exceeding costs on the island, which only adds to that \$5.6 billion balance.

Despite all of these resources, we have agreed that the Government of Puerto Rico needs additional funding for nutrition assistance. My Democratic colleagues have been in the forefront. The question is, Why? It is that this money is actually being spent. In fact, it is running out. So not only did my Democratic colleagues leave folks in the Midwest behind when they rejected the Shelby amendment earlier this week, but they also passed up an opportunity to help the people of Puerto Rico immediately.

Where do we go from here?

I think we need to find areas of agreement, which we have before in my working with Senator LEAHY, Senator SCHUMER, and Senator MCCONNELL. I am pleased that my Democratic colleagues have discovered a newfound concern for the people in the Midwest. We want to stay on that too. It is promising that we not only agree on that but also that we should provide funding for nutrition assistance for the people of Puerto Rico now. Yet, when it comes to additional funding beyond nutrition assistance for Puerto Rico, I believe that our constituents—the American taxpayers—deserve a detailed explanation of exactly why existing funding is insufficient and why the resources that we have provided have not been spent.

How do we know Puerto Rico needs more when it hasn't come close to spending what we have already provided it? Communities, meanwhile, that experienced disasters in 2018 are truly suffering because Congress has provided them with nothing.

Unless my Democratic colleagues can demonstrate this urgency, I believe they should stop holding hostage those who are suffering in the Midwest and those who have been impacted by disasters all over the United States. These people are in urgent need of funding so they can begin the rebuilding process, and many of them have been waiting for months and months for relief.

I hope we can come together and work this out in a deliberate and fact-based manner. Until then, I will con-

tinue to object to these haphazard unanimous consent requests that will get us nowhere.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 6 minutes regarding the Schumer-Leahy amendment. I realize this will put off the time slightly for the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am sorry that the Republicans objected to the earlier legislation we brought up, which would have helped the Midwest. It had money in it. Of course, we are not, by any means, asking for billions more for Puerto Rico in this amendment. In total, this amendment would add \$3.2 billion, of which only \$462 million is for Puerto Rico. The rest is for the Midwest floods, Alabama tornado, Florida, California, Georgia and other states.

I think it is unfortunate we have reached an impasse on the emergency disaster supplemental appropriations bill.

For months, I urged Senate Republican leadership to take up and pass H.R. 268. For nearly 3 months, it wouldn't. During those 3 months, American communities suffered, and new disasters struck the Midwest and the Southeast. The new criticism from the Republican leadership was, with the Democrats' pushing for more comprehensive aid to Puerto Rico in H.R. 268, that they must not care about the American communities that have been affected by more recent disasters.

But I would remind the Chamber that it was the Republican leadership that rejected my amendment to H.R. 268 that would have accommodated all of these other communities.

I would also remind the Chamber that the Trump administration has not asked for one dime for Hurricanes Michael and Florence, the Alabama tornadoes, or the Midwest flooding. To the Trump administration, it is as though they never happened.

I have always stood with victims of disaster around this country. When my own State of Vermont was devastated by Tropical Storm Irene, Members of this body came to me, not as Republicans or Democrats but as concerned American citizens looking to help, just as I always have, whatever State it might be. Red State, blue State, or purple State, I have always voted to support them, and today this Vermonter is here to stand with all the American communities affected by recent natural disasters.

I have not given up on finding a path forward. Today Leader SCHUMER and I offered a substitute that would provide \$2.5 billion in new funding to address the needs of communities affected by the 2019 disasters, such as flooding in the Midwest and tornadoes in Alabama. It would also accommodate the needs

of the American citizens—remember that they are Americans—in Puerto Rico and other Territories by including increased funding for the community development block grant and grants to help rebuild damaged water systems. It also includes Medicaid funding for the Northern Mariana Islands and cost match waivers for the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and American Samoa.

Finally, it mandates that HUD speed up the release of billions in previously appropriated CDBG funding which the Trump administration has unnecessarily withheld from disaster-stricken communities in Puerto Rico, in Texas, in Louisiana, in the U.S. Virgin Islands, in Florida, in South Carolina, in North Carolina, in West Virginia, in California, in Missouri, and in Georgia. We want to get help to all of those States.

I am disappointed that once again Senate Republicans have objected to this critical assistance. We are the United States of America. We are all Americans. We cannot pick and choose which American citizens to help in times of crisis.

Frankly, I was offended when the White House referred to Puerto Rico as "that country" that "only takes from the U.S.A." I would remind the White House to look at a history book. Puerto Rico is part of the U.S.A. These are our fellow American citizens. We in the Senate must be better than that. We must stand with all American citizens in times of crisis.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Roy Kalman Altman, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Altman nomination?

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 66, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 62 Ex.]

YEAS—66

Alexander
Barrasso
Blackburn

Blunt
Boozman
Braun

Burr
Capito
Cardin