

continue our work to give the people the government they chose, the government they deserve.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, as I mentioned, we are in the middle of a historic economic moment for the American people.

Last week, the nationwide unemployment rate fell to its lowest level since December of 1969. In just the year and a half since the Republicans passed comprehensive tax reform, 19 States have set new alltime lows in their unemployment rates, including in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

If you compare today to November 2016, there are now nearly 70 percent more job openings in durable goods manufacturing and more than twice as many job openings in construction. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of new job openings in these sectors alone.

Overall, under the Republicans' policies of the last 2 years, for the first time in recorded history, the number of job openings across the country has surpassed the number of Americans who are looking for work. Think about that. There is more than one job opening for every American who wants a job.

So this economic moment, helped along by Republican policies, has placed American workers in much higher demand, and we know what happens when American workers are in high demand—they get paid more. Sure enough, from late 2017 to late 2018, wage growth for U.S. workers logged its fastest full-year growth rate in a decade.

What is more, the New York Times reported:

The recent gains are going to those who need it most. Over the past year, low-wage workers have experienced the fastest pay increases, a shift from earlier in the recovery, when wage growth was concentrated at the top.

Of course, that phrase “earlier in the recovery” is code for during the Obama administration.

How often do we hear the left invoke the stale talking point that pro-growth policies only help wealthy people? Anyone who has cracked open a history book knows it is absurd to say that American free enterprise only helps wealthy people and that State-controlled socialism helps everyone else. Anyone who has picked up a newspaper in the last year and a half knows it as well.

Capitalism and free enterprise are the best tools humanity has ever discovered for lifting up the vulnerable and for empowering people. It was true in the 19th century; it was true in the 20th century; and it is still proving to be true in 2019.

It has been on the Republicans' watch that we have actually seen low-wage workers and nonmanagement workers receive the fastest wage

growth. It has been on the Republicans' watch that the unemployment rate specifically for Americans without high school diplomas has fallen to its lowest rate since 1992. It has been on the Republicans' watch that newspapers have described “a wave of disabled Americans” who have been able to join or return to the workforce.

My Republican colleagues and I could not be more proud of the conditions our policies have helped to create for all kinds of American workers and their families, and we will continue to defend these gains, to put pro-growth, pro-opportunity reforms in place, and to stand up against the far-left grab bag of socialist ideas that would threaten America's progress.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Montana.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Michael H. Park, of New York, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit.

ABORTION

Mr. DAINES. Madam President, a few weeks ago, I stood right here condemning Virginia Governor Ralph Northam's chilling remarks about infanticide. Since then, the American people have continued to witness disturbing abortion extremism by Democratic public lawmakers. So here I am again today to condemn and address these horrific remarks and the unfortunate reality we are living in today in this country.

Last week, while opposing a bill to protect unborn human life, Democratic Alabama State Representative John Rogers said: “Some kids are unwanted, so you kill them now or you kill them later.” He went on to say: “You bring them in the world unwanted, unloved, you send them to the electric chair. So you kill them now or you kill them later.”

These reprehensible remarks reveal a disturbing abortion extremism that has become far too normal, too accepted by the Democrats. All human life is precious, no matter the stage of development or disability. We must never forget these are innocent babies we are talking about.

Just this week, Democratic Pennsylvania State Representative Brian Sims posted a disgraceful video of himself online—I encourage you to go and watch it—a disgraceful video of himself online harassing three teenage girls who were praying outside a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic. He went as far as promising to pay \$100 to anyone who would identify these innocent teenage girls.

Horrific comments like Representative Rogers' and harassment of pro-life teens by Representative Sims should be condemned at the State and the national level by all, regardless of political party. We must not let this continue to be the norm in our society. We must fight back.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate Democratic leader is recognized.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on Tuesday afternoon, our country suffered another shooting—this time in Highlands Ranch, CO. It was the second shooting of the week following a weekend where at least 19 people were shot in Baltimore, 16 in St. Louis, and 28 in Chicago.

My grandson is less than a year old. He turned over in his crib last night—great accomplishment. But on a serious note, I don't want him to live in a world where this is the norm. I don't want him to see this on TV every other week. I don't want him to come home after school to tell his parents about learning to hide under a desk with the lights off. I don't want him to grow up in a country where children and adolescents are more than 20 times more likely to be killed with guns than their peers in other high-income countries.

I want him—little Noah and every other child in America—to live in a world where America's gun violence epidemic is a thing of the past. It may seem a naive thought in a cynical time, but I believe we can get there. We can take steps right now to make these incidents less likely. Nothing will prevent them, but there are lots of things we can do to make them a lot less frequent. A few months ago, the House did just that. The House passed legislation to close the loopholes in Federal background checks—something that more than 90 percent of all Americans support.

No one here pretends that we can prevent every incident, but we have a choice to face between moving in the right direction in a significant way and doing nothing. That is why I am so disappointed once again that Leader McCONNELL and the Republican majority have turned this Chamber into a

legislative graveyard where even the most bipartisan, broadly supported legislation like background checks can't even get a vote or a discussion. Here we are at the end of another week in the Senate. This week, we have done nothing but process nominations. It is not because there is nothing else to do. There are over 100 bills—many non-controversial and many bipartisan—that have passed the House and are awaiting Senate action, but Leader MCCONNELL has turned the Senate into a legislative graveyard.

When the American people demand action, Leader MCCONNELL does nothing. When the American people demand action, the Senate Republicans are in obeisance to this strategy of a graveyard, even when in their hearts they may know doing that is not right and they would like to debate the issues, whatever their views.

Leader MCCONNELL promised to preside over an open Senate, with vigorous debate and amendment votes and the ability to vote on issues of the day. He promised that, and he said no matter which party offered the ideas. Leader MCCONNELL is breaking those promises when he consigns bill after bill—every one of them needed by America, needed by the middle class, needed by working people—every one of them to a legislative graveyard. So there are no debates, no amendments, no progress, no hope for the American people as the Senate continues to be in such a legislative graveyard.

PUERTO RICO

Madam President, on Puerto Rico, last night President Trump held his first Florida rally of the year in Panama City, in the heart of the Florida Panhandle, which was so awfully devastated by Hurricane Michael last year. President Trump's speech contained all the usual demagoguery and bloviating, but one thing in particular stuck in his craw. The President used his rally in Florida to denigrate once again the island of Puerto Rico, to repeat falsehoods about how much aid it has received, and to pit one American against another, which seems to be his MO.

Again, the President said that Puerto Rico has gotten \$91 billion of disaster aid—flat-out false. They received a hair over \$11 billion.

Mr. President, ask your budget people how many dollars Puerto Rico has received, and they will not tell you the \$91 billion falsehood you have repeated over and over.

Again, I saw the President pit Americans against each other, going so far as to hold up a flimsy graphic to get Floridians in his audience to turn against Americans in Puerto Rico. At a time when we need unity, at a time when we should be together, with all the threats challenging us—domestic and foreign and all the other types of challenges—all the President can do is to appeal to people's worst instincts and divide us. We are humans. We are made by God. We have good and bad in each of us.

The President should be appealing to the good side, not the bad side, but all he does is the bad side. It is a shame.

Of course, he said that Puerto Ricans should be grateful for whatever disaster aid they have received, as a pretext for not doing more. Does he say that to the people of Florida: You shouldn't get any more aid because you received some already and you should be grateful. Of course not, it is a double standard. President Trump ought to be ashamed of himself for condescending to and publicly mocking a community that is still suffering. These are men, women, and children. They still don't have their homes, their hospitals, their schools. They can't go on with life, and he is mocking them? What did they do wrong? They are American citizens. I sometimes cannot believe the depth of cruelty that the President uses to treat fellow American citizens this way.

The fact remains, we can end the impasse over disaster aid at a moment's notice. To the people of Florida: All you have to do is tell your Senators to vote for the full aid package, including aid to Puerto Rico, and you will get all the aid you need, all the aid that Congress has allocated. Just do that.

But Republican Senators, after Donald Trump went in and said no more aid to Puerto Rico, blindly bowed in obeisance. The House will never pass a bill that doesn't treat Puerto Rico as fairly as it treats the other States of the Union.

Let's decide now that we are going to help every corner of America that is hit by disaster, because that is what Americans have always done.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Madam President, on the climate and dark money, I want to return to the topic of climate change, specifically today. Why in our political system has progress on climate change been so slow? Why is it that so many Republicans here in the Senate are afraid to say yes to three questions: Is climate change real? Is it caused by humans? Should we do something about it? They are afraid to say yes on any of those. Why? It is so obvious to almost everybody else.

Well, one of the dominant reasons is that for decades Big Oil, Big Gas, and Big Coal have devoted huge financial resources to stymie political progress and sow doubt about climate science. For years, one of the biggest perpetrators of this anti-climate campaign has been the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The national chamber of commerce, which bears almost no resemblance to local chambers across the country, has acted like a fossil fuel front group. It accepts millions of dollars in dark money, will not reveal its secret donors, and has consistently fought any attempts by our government to grapple with climate change—carbon pricing, reducing methane emissions, and even the Paris climate accords.

The game has become so obvious that major American corporations have disassociated themselves with the chamber over its climate policies.

Recently, the chamber has begun to talk as if it intends to get better on climate change. They added a new page to their website and announced an "energy innovation" agenda. I welcome the progress. But truthfully, the chamber has made a shocking about-face from climate denier to supposed climate believer and advocate. It is hard not to be skeptical. Now, if the chamber were serious about combating climate change, it would disclose its donors and let the world see that it is finally changing. Maybe it would even start endorsing different candidates or getting behind truly bold legislation. Maybe they can come here and lobby that we should support the Paris accords. Until that day, the chamber's so-called big change on climate seems to be cosmetic.

It may seem that I am spending an awful lot of time on one group, but it matters. The chamber is part of a vast network of generally rightwing organizations that accept and disseminate billions of dollars of special interest money with zero disclosure. It has warped our political process by creating a financial incentive for many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to oppose climate policies that deal with climate change, to oppose appropriate consumer protections, to oppose environmental protections, and to oppose issues such as gun safety, as well.

Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island has done an amazing—an outstanding job—of bringing this issue to the forefront and exposing the web of dark money that lurks evilly behind our politics. I want to thank and commend him for it.

I am glad that organizations like the chamber are feeling the heat for opposing climate change and proposed solutions. They should. But the bigger and more pervasive issue is that dark money will continue to flow into our political system until we change it. Until we deal with it or until groups start voluntary disclosures, in all likelihood these organizations will continue to frustrate the progress behind the scenes and the longing we all have to keep our planet the beautiful place that it is and to prevent the seas from rising and the weather from changing and the coral reefs from disappearing. That will not become a reality as long as this dark money is still having a stranglehold on so many of the other party.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak as in morning