

year ago exactly, the President torpedoed bipartisan negotiations by demanding the very same thing—funding for his border wall—and the result was the longest government shutdown in history.

Funding for a border wall was a non-starter for Democrats then, and it remains a nonstarter for Democrats now. The votes did not exist even within the President's own party then, and they have not materialized now.

We had hoped the President had learned his lesson, but it appears that exactly a year after losing this same battle, the President is considering a repeat of history and another Trump shutdown.

I hope cooler heads will prevail—I believe they will—but I would warn President Trump and my Republican colleagues, the last Trump shutdown was terrible for the American people and terrible for Republicans. It is in all of our interests to keep the President away from the appropriations process and avoid another Trump shutdown before Christmas.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mr. President, finally, on SNAP, today the Trump administration announced it had completed a new rule that would potentially throw hundreds of thousands of needy Americans off food assistance.

Let me repeat. Hundreds of thousands of people who need food and have struggled to find employment would be kicked off Federal food assistance under a new Trump administration rule.

Right now, there are about 37 million Americans who receive benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The vast majority of them work, but they don't earn enough to feed their families, and those who don't qualify for assistance for 3 months out of every 3 years.

Under the new rule, the Trump administration would trample on States' abilities to request waivers to these strict time limits in areas of great unemployment. Nearly every State in the Union has requested a waiver at one point or another.

The Trump administration is driving the vulnerable into hunger just as the Christmas season approaches. It is heartless, it is cruel, and it exposes a deep and shameful cruelty and hypocrisy in this administration.

One of the Trump administration's justifications for these cuts is that they will save the government money. Well, 2 years ago this very month, the Trump administration blew a more than trillion-dollar hole in our deficit with a gargantuan tax cut for corporations and the ultra-rich. The Trump administration argued it was money well spent. Now, the same administration says we have to pinch pennies when it comes to helping the hungry, particularly around Christmastime? This makes the Grinch look charitable. The same Trump administration that

has steered millions of dollars to wealthy agribusinesses and foreign-owned entities is now saying they need to save money by cutting off food aid to poor families who need it. This is jarring hypocrisy, and it shows clear as day where this administration's priorities clearly lie—with the rich and powerful, not the most vulnerable members of our society.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oklahoma.

NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, we have a debt issue in America. For some reason, we are losing track of that. The economy is so good right now. Unemployment is at historic numbers. The inflation numbers have stayed down. More Americans are bringing home more take-home pay, which means they can buy more stuff. More job opportunities are out there. In fact, we literally have 1.5 million more job openings in America than we have people looking for work in America.

With the economy going so well right now, everyone is losing track of the debt and deficit, which are not going well right now. Last year, the Federal Treasury received more tax revenues than it has ever received in the history of the United States, which is surprising to some folks I have talked to who said that there was a big tax cut in 2017, so that would mean tax revenue would go down. It didn't. It went up.

When that tax cut occurred, more people were able to bring home more money and to spend more, which created more jobs. There was more investment, and the economy charged up. So we actually have more revenue coming in now than we used to have, but we still have a trillion-dollar deficit. That is the amount of overspending in a single year. We have the highest amount of revenue we have ever had. Yet we have epic levels of deficit spending, adding to \$23 trillion in total debt as a nation—\$23 trillion. It is a number none of us can even fathom.

We are approaching a time when it would take the income of every single American for the entire year to be collected as taxes to pay off our debt. We are at 95 percent total debt to GDP. These kinds of numbers can't be sustained, and everyone quietly knows it in the back of their mind, but dealing with debt and deficit seem to be something we will deal with in the future—someday, someday, someday.

I am here to encourage this body to say that we should be taking on the issues of debt and deficit now. The two things that have to occur in order to get on top of our debt and deficit are to get a growing economy with growing revenues—we have that now—and then we have to deal with Federal spending.

What would it take to manage Federal spending? We are so far out of balance. A trillion dollars—literally we could shut down the entire Department of Defense, the Department of Education, the State Department—we

could close down every single one of those, and we still wouldn't balance in a year. And no one would propose doing that. There is no 1-year fix to trying to get on top of our deficit; this will be a multiyear process.

Just to state how bad it has become, if we chipped away at our deficit for the next 10 years—for 10 years, chipped away at our deficit to get us back to just balance—and then we had a \$100 billion surplus the next year, which would be an enormous surplus, with a \$100 billion surplus—it would take us 230 years in a row of having a \$100 billion surplus in our Treasury just to deal with our debt. It would take 230 years in a row of \$100 billion surpluses.

Again, we are not just out of balance; we are way out of balance. There is no one secret thing we can do to get us back on track, but we do need to get started. That is why our team puts out something we call "Federal Fumbles." The "Federal Fumbles" guide is something we put out every single year. It is just a group of ideas. It is no magic bullet. It is just something our office puts out that looks at areas of inefficiency across the Federal Government and ask: Why is this happening the way it is happening, and what would happen if we continue doing the same things we are doing? Are there areas where we can save money and that we would be OK with as a group?

We are not trying to put out partisan ideas; we are just putting out ideas. Quite frankly, the "Federal Fumbles" guide is not a confrontation for this body; it is the opening salvo in a conversation. We are bringing our ideas. You may have different ideas. Great. Bring yours. Let's try to figure out how to solve this together because this last year, we paid \$371 billion just in interest payments on our debt. This fiscal year, we paid \$423 billion just in interest. That is \$423 billion that is not going to healthcare, transportation, the basic structure of our government, or the national defense. It is \$423 billion spent on interest payments, and it just goes away.

We are asking questions as we put out this Federal Fumbles guide. How do we solve this? What are some ideas?

We have simple questions such as, why did the Social Security office pay \$11.6 million to deceased beneficiaries in Puerto Rico?

We ask questions such as, why did the government pay almost half a billion dollars last year on temporary tents—not buying them, renting temporary tents—along our southern border? Was there a better way that could have been done other than half a billion dollars in cost?

We have some questions about the 21 government shutdowns that have occurred in the last 40 years, including the one earlier this year. That shutdown cost the Federal taxpayer over \$4 billion.

We ask straightforward questions about things like tax credits. If you like the Tesla that you pull up next to

at a stoplight and you gaze at its beauty and think that is a beautiful car, well, great, I am glad you like it because you helped pay for it. All of those Teslas that are on the road—\$7,500 of the cost of that Tesla was paid by you, the Federal taxpayer. So what you should do at a stoplight is roll down your window and say to the person driving the Tesla: It is my turn. I helped pay for the car. Why don't you let me drive it for the rest of the day?

We ask questions about grants for such things as sea lions in Russia because the U.S. taxpayer gave almost \$2 million to study sea lions in Russia last year. We spent \$600,000 doing a documentary on Joseph Stalin. We spent a big chunk of money actually studying the Russian flu in 1889. Why did we do that?

Some of these things are small, and some of them are large.

We laid out a proposal dealing with prescription drugs because the way the tiering is done on prescription drugs now costs the Federal taxpayer \$22 billion. That is because generic drugs were placed on a higher cost branded tier, so the Federal taxpayer and the consumer end up paying not the generic price but the more expensive branded price when they could have paid the lower price. That is a cost of \$22 billion for just that one piece.

We laid out a whole set of ideas and said: Let's just look at them together.

This Congress passed \$380 million that was sent out to the States to help with election security. After the Russians were clearly trying to interfere with our elections in 2016, we decided to do something about it to help our States. So \$380 million was sent out to the States to do the work that was needed to be done to upgrade election security equipment and to be prepared for 2020.

As of this last July, of the \$380 million sent to the States, the States have only spent a little over \$100 million. They have literally banked the other \$250 million and just saved it and said: We will use it sometime. The 2020 elections are coming. The money was allocated, but it has not actually been spent and used for election security.

We want to highlight issues and find ways to solve them. We didn't try to bring partisan ideas; we just brought ideas.

This is our fifth volume. We have had other editions that dealt with other issues that need to be resolved. In the back of the book, we actually put out what we call the "Touchdowns" and the forward progress. These are some of the things we listed in previous versions that we actually looked at and can say we have made some progress on these things in trying to actually solve them. That is because at times we complain about what is happening in government, but we don't identify the good things, and there are a lot of good things that are actually happening.

This Senate passed the GREAT Act. The GREAT Act dramatically in-

creases the way we handle data on grants. About \$600 billion a year in the Federal Government is spent just on grants. We think there needs to be greater oversight on that, and this Senate has agreed. This Senate has sent the GREAT Act over to the House and has said: Let's try to resolve how we can be more effective in how we do grants and be more transparent in the process and streamline the data itself to make it easier on those requesting a grant, as well as allowing for more transparency in where the Federal dollars are going. We don't want to just complain about the way grants are done; we want to try to actually fix it.

We highlight multiple other areas where we have made real progress in the past year tackling some of the things we have listed in previous versions of "Federal Fumbles."

But I do want to remind this body that while we talk about some of these hard issues, we often break into Republican-Democratic fights over hard issues. America is more than an economy, and while the economy is extremely important, we are Americans. We are Americans together. While we struggle to deal with hard issues, such as debt and deficit and what is going to be done to resolve this, we just can't conveniently go into our corners and make speeches and say that we have tried; we have to sit down and do hard things and do hard things together.

That is why we are opening this conversation. That is why we keep this conversation going, because I do believe that while the economy is important, who we are and how we value each other is just as important because we have the responsibility to solve this. Again, other offices may have other ideas on how to resolve it. Great. Let's bring all those ideas together. Let's get 100 books like this, and everyone bring their ideas. Then let's actually do the work to solve this in the future.

We are Americans. We do hard things. This one is going to be hard, and it is going to take a long time, but it doesn't get easier if we don't start, and it doesn't get done until we begin. So I am challenging us today to begin. Let's deal with the ways we have fumbled the ball in the past, and let's solve our debt and deficit together over the years into the future.

With that, 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. PORTMAN. 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.

The Senator from Ohio.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am on the floor today to urge the U.S.

Congress to do the right thing, and that is to allow a vote on this new agreement between Mexico and Canada and the United States.

Unbelievably, this agreement was negotiated a year ago—they signed it at the end of November last year—and yet for a year now, Congress has refused to take it up. It has got to go to the House of Representatives first, and Speaker PELOSI and the House Democrats who control that body have not been willing to at least take it to the floor for a vote.

The agreement is such a big improvement over the status quo. The status quo is the NAFTA agreement, which is 25 years old. The new agreement, which was negotiated a year ago, gives something that Canada wants, Mexico wants, and the United States wants. We want it because it is really important to us.

It is particularly important to my home State of Ohio. I will tell you our No. 1 trading partner by far is Canada. We send about 40 percent of our exports to one country: Canada. So to have a better agreement with our biggest trading partner—and our second biggest trading partner, which is Mexico—is really important. Alongside Mexico, our trade with Canada accounts for about \$28 billion a year.

I am hearing a lot about it. I am hearing from Ohio farmers. They have had a tough time. A combination of bad weather, a combination of shrinking markets for them in China, and a combination of low commodity prices going in to the bad weather period last year has made it really tough for farmers. A lot of them are having a very difficult time making ends meet this year.

They see the USMCA for what it is, an expansion of their market. They can sell more stuff to Canada and to Mexico, and that will help them improve their prices and help them to be able to get through this tough period, so for them, it is a light at the end of the tunnel. If we can get this new trade agreement passed, it means expanded markets for dairy products, for pork, for corn and soybeans, and other commodities. Get those prices up, and give our farmers a chance to compete on a level playing field. This is a good thing. That is why they are all for it.

Businesses really want the USMCA passed. By the way, I hear mostly from small businesses about this because they increasingly have looked to markets overseas—particularly Canada and Mexico in the State of Ohio—and they are concerned that if we do not put this agreement forward, we are going to have a lot of uncertainty out there, and they are going to sell less stuff, rather than more stuff, to these countries.

So a lot of small manufacturers in particular sell a lot from Ohio to Canada and to Mexico, and they tell me they want this agreement passed—and passed now—because it will really help them. My colleagues here in the Senate