

them—have their right to life respected and receive the medical care they need.

It builds on the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act of 2002, which did indeed pass this body by unanimous consent, and creates enforcement mechanisms if abortion providers fail to give these newborn babies the medical attention and care they so obviously deserve.

Completely apart from the rest of our debate on the issue of life, how could this question be any clearer? What could be more unanimous than this: What medical professionals owe every single newborn American citizen, regardless of the circumstances of their birth, is attention and care—not neglect and certainly not violence. Frankly, it is harrowing that this legislation is even necessary.

What is even more disturbing when, last week, a Democratic Governor was unable to clearly and simply state that, of course—of course—these newborn babies have human rights that must be respected.

I have been a proud cosponsor of Senator SASSE's legislation, and I hope none of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle invent any reasons to block this request later today. That would make quite a disturbing statement.

If they do inexplicably block Senator SASSE's effort, I can assure them this will not be the last time we try to afford newborns this fundamental legal protection.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, one final matter—last week, our Nation received yet another wave of good news about our strong economy and all the opportunities it is creating for working Americans.

Republicans' pro-growth, pro-family economic policies have helped our Nation's job creators and small businesses hit the accelerator, and middle-class families across the country continue to reap the rewards.

The Labor Department tracks the total amount that U.S. employers spend each year on wages and benefits for workers. Last quarter, the year-on-year increase was the highest it has been in more than 10 years. Last month, the total percentage of Americans who are employed hit its highest mark since December 2008.

Let me say that again. Following Republican policies, we are now seeing the largest annual jump in a decade in the amount spent on workers' compensation and a higher percentage of Americans working than we saw at any point—at any point—under President Obama.

An expert described these data to the New York Times: "Employers are still actively looking for jobs, and with wages ticking up, it looks like workers are getting some more bargaining power."

Another expert put it this way: "The virtuous cycle continues . . . a vir-

tuous cycle of a continuously growing U.S. labor market."

So I am confident we will hear more about this from the President in his address Tuesday evening. The state of our Nation's economy is thriving and working Americans are feeling the boost. This is what happens when Republican policies get Washington out of the way.

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. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THE STATE OF THE UNION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, tomorrow, President Trump will belatedly report on the state of the Union before a joint session of Congress. The reason for the delay, of course, is the 35-day government shutdown that President Trump precipitated as an attempt to extract taxpayer money for a wall he promised Mexico would pay for, a pointless exercise, if there ever were one—a pointless exercise that punished hundreds of thousands of innocent public servants and took billions of dollars out of our economy.

We are all glad that the government is back open and Federal workers are back on the job and getting paid, but the recent government shutdown speaks to the fundamental uncertainty about the state of our Union.

Tomorrow, the President will say, predictably, that the state of our Union is strong, but the truth is that the state of the Trump economy is failing America's middle class, that the state of the Trump healthcare system is failing American families, that the state of the Trump administration is embroiled in chaos and incompetence, and that the state of the President's foreign policy is incoherent, inconsistent, and cynical in the extreme and has undermined American power and our national interests. In sum, the state of our Union is in need of drastic repair.

Let's begin with the state of the Trump economy. Corporate America has cashed in on the Trump tax bill, but working America has been left behind. Since the tax bill passed over a year ago, corporations have announced plans to repurchase more than \$1 trillion of their own stock—a practice that benefits corporate executives and wealthy shareholders but not many average workers. Meanwhile, Reuters reports that the tax bill had no major impact on whether businesses made

capital investments or hired more workers. The very wealthy—the big, powerful corporations—fed this line: Help them, and everyone will be helped. Our Republican friends swallowed that—hook, line, and sinker.

The only good news about this tax bill that passed last year is that it showed what a false promise it was—\$1 trillion for the wealthy through stock buybacks and other things and virtually nothing for American workers. The President promised—remember this?—that his tax bill would deliver a \$4,000 raise to the average household. The reality is that wages for average workers have remained quite stagnant. Workers are still making less today than they did in 1973 after adjusting for inflation. The effect of the Trump economy has been a deepening of the inequalities and wealth disparities that threaten the future of the middle class and the future of the American dream. The rich are getting richer. The middle class is being hollowed out. That is the state of the Trump economy.

How about healthcare? The state of our healthcare system is dire. Premiums are higher than they should be. Out-of-pocket costs are higher than they should be. The uninsured rate is, once again, rising. This is the result of a relentless sabotage by the Trump administration and congressional Republicans. The Trump administration expanded junk insurance plans. It supports a lawsuit that would end protections for Americans with preexisting conditions. It all but eliminated programs that help people find the right coverage for themselves and their families, and it continues to routinely propose and approve policies that cause people to lose coverage and cause health insurance markets to spiral into chaos.

When any one of us goes home, one just has to be home for a short time before hearing of people with horror stories of how they had normal procedures and were told that this doctor was not covered, that this procedure was not covered, and that it would be several thousand dollars out of their pockets, which they can't afford. We are told of one horror story or another—of the cost of something like insulin, which is way through the roof, when it should be available because it does so much for those who have diabetes. We hear story after story, and those aren't isolated. That is the state of the Trump healthcare system.

The past 2 years have been a wholesale assault by the Trump administration on Americans' healthcare. I doubt President Trump will mention that tomorrow, but if you ask American families of the No. 1 problem they face, it will be the cost of good healthcare, which seems more and more out of reach. So the state of the Trump healthcare system is dire.

What is the state of the Trump administration? The state of the Trump administration is chaos. Underqualified staffers cycle in and out of our

government's most powerful positions. Cabinet Secretaries are fired over Twitter. Hundreds of important positions are unfilled or are covered by someone in an acting capacity, including for the Chief of Staff, the Attorney General, the Defense Secretary, the Interior Secretary, the OMB Director, and the EPA Director.

Hardly a week goes by without news of a high-profile firing or resignation from the White House. President Trump publicly belittles the people who are working for him. That is no way to incent people to work hard. An NPR study found that the Trump administration has had the most Cabinet turnovers of any administration in more than a century. Three Cabinet Secretaries have been fired or have resigned in scandal—Price, Zinke, and Pruitt. One has resigned in protest—probably the best Cabinet member we had—General Mattis, who couldn't take Trump's zigzags on policy and his lack of sharing information. Another had his nomination pulled before it could be considered—Puzder—which is not altogether rare for this President.

Since the start of the administration, more than 40 of President Trump's nominees have been withdrawn. They don't know how to vet. The President makes these off-the-cuff decisions based on how someone looks, and we all pay the price. Oh, yes, the state of the Trump administration and how he runs the government—chaos. The continuity and effectiveness of American Government has been deeply compromised by the turmoil and turnover at the White House.

Finally, the state of the Trump foreign policy is woefully backward. From Brussels to Beijing, President Trump has alienated our allies and emboldened our adversaries. Russia, China, North Korea—three of the worst and least democratic countries on Earth, the countries that pose the greatest threats to America—are treated with kid gloves, while our allies, like those in NATO, get harsh words from this President. It is inside out. It is topsy-turvy. It is what his instincts and gut show, and they are totally wrong—without fact, without knowledge, and without understanding history. Too often, the President has, regrettably, failed to champion free speech, freedom of the press, humanitarian rights, and democratic values. Dictators and strongmen are ascendant in the President's circle while allies are pushed to the fringe. Yes, the state of the Trump foreign policy is woefully backward.

Concerning the speech tomorrow night, the President will not talk like this, of course. What I expect the President to do is to ignore reality and spin his own fiction. A looming question is just how many falsehoods, distortions, and made-up facts will appear in the President's speech. How many times will he say something is fake news because it is true, and he doesn't like to hear the truth?

Yet the Democrats are not focused on the President's rhetoric—his usual boasts or bluster or blame—that is so characteristic of this administration. We are going to continue fighting for American workers in this unequal economy, fighting for American families who are struggling to afford quality healthcare, fighting to bring accountability and stability to this government so in chaos, and fighting for rational foreign policy that promotes both our interests and our values.

The state of the Union is sad. Let me just say that the No. 1 reason the state of the Union has such woes is the President. I hope he changes in the next 2 years.

STOCK BUYBACKS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, one other issue—I mentioned earlier that one of the major consequences of the Trump tax bill was the explosion of stock buybacks. In 2018 alone—just 2018—U.S. companies announced plans to repurchase more than \$1 trillion of their own stock. It is a staggering figure and the highest amount ever recorded in a single year.

When companies buy back their own stock, it boosts the earnings of wealthy shareholders and executives but does little for average workers. The vast majority of Americans don't own stocks. In fact, the top 10 percent of Americans own 85 percent of stocks, total.

When corporations direct so much of their resources to buy back shares, they restrain their capacity to reinvest profits in R&D, equipment, higher wages, medical leave, pensions, worker retraining, and more.

I would like to see a study of how many companies bought back their stocks while leaving pensions underfunded. What is happening is that corporations are promising their workers that they will have a good life in retirement, and, instead, the corporate executives and their top shareholders are enriching themselves.

Think about this. Between 2008 and 2017—the last 10 years—466 of the S&P 500 companies did stock buybacks. Do you know how much? It was \$4 trillion. That is equal to 53 percent of their profits. More than \$1 out of every \$2 in profit just went to stock buybacks—not improving our economy, not helping workers, and not helping communities. Then another 30 percent went to dividends. It is the same thing. When more than 80 percent of corporate profits are going to stock buybacks and dividends, something is really wrong in the state of corporate America and the state of our economy.

It wasn't always this way. From the mid-20th century up until the seventies and even into the eighties, American corporations shared a belief that they had a duty not just to their shareholders but to their workers, to their communities, and to their country, which helped them grow and prosper,

along with our schools, our roads, and everything else. That created an extremely prosperous America for corporate America but also for American workers in the broad middle of this country.

But over the past several decades, workers' rights have been diminished, and corporate boardrooms have been obsessed, slavishly, to shareholder earnings. The only people they seem to want to help are their shareholders.

I hear it. I talk to CEOs, and they say: Well, maybe it is the wrong thing to do this or that, but I just have to go for the shareholder. And the shareholder often has only short-term interest. The explosion of stock buybacks is, perhaps, the most pernicious way that this new corporate ethos manifests itself.

My friend and colleague Senator SANDERS and I have written a joint op-ed in today's New York Times, outlining how we propose to curb the over-reliance on stock buybacks and, instead, encourage corporate America to make more productive investments that help workers and communities therein.

We are planning to introduce legislation that will prohibit a corporation from buying back its own stock unless it invests in workers and communities first, including doing things—there will be a list—like paying people \$15 an hour, providing 7 days of sick leave, offering decent pensions, more reliable healthcare, putting money into training workers, and providing equipment. These are the kinds of things we always thought American corporations would do and now they do scantily when compared to how much they do in terms of buybacks.

I know many of my Democratic colleagues have focused on these issues, including Senators BALDWIN, BOOKER, CASEY, WARREN, SCHATZ, and GILLIBRAND. We all believe that this Congress, this Senate, should vote on legislation that demands that corporations commit to addressing the needs of their workers and communities before the interests of wealthy shareholders.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST ACT OF 2019—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1, which the clerk will report.