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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our Lord and our God, as the waters fill the sea, fill our Nation with people who know and love You. Remind us that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to many people.

Today guide our lawmakers so that they will live for Your honor. Increase their faith, hope, and love, enabling them to become more effective instruments for Your glory. Lord, give comfort to all who seek You, for You have promised to supply all our needs from Your celestial bounty.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The majority leader is recognized.

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday the Senate took another step toward delivering an important package of legislation. We passed my amendment to Strengthening America's Security in the Middle East Act and voted to advance the bill, both by very wide bipartisan margins. S. 1 represents the broad consensus of this body about our Nation's responsibil-

ities as an ally and a partner. It reaffirms our promise to uphold Israel's security, to help Jordan face complex security challenges, and to hold Bashar al-Assad's murderous henchmen accountable.

I look forward to the Senate voting on final passage soon and sending this bipartisan legislation over to the House.

After we complete that work, the Senate will return to the Natural Resources Management Act, a high-priority bill containing more than 100 proposals concerning economic development, public lands, water resources, and conservation.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, tonight Congress will host President Trump for his second State of the Union Address. I am looking forward to attending and hearing the President reflect on the great strides our Nation has made over the past 2 years and his vision for the challenges that are still before us.

From historic tax reform and regulatory reform, to huge progress in the fight against ISIS, to landmark progress in the nationwide fight against opioid addiction, the story over the last 2 years has been one of immense policy progress for our country.

The American people are less interested in beltway melodrama and more interested in the classic question: Am I better off than I was 2 years ago? On this front, thanks to a few key Republican victories and a number of major bipartisan accomplishments, the state of the Union is strong and growing stronger.

It has now been more than 2 years since the American people hired President Trump and a Republican Congress to get Washington's foot off the brake of our economy. Since then, we got to work rebuilding the middle-class prosperity that had hollowed out commu-

nities across America under the Obama economy.

After 8 years of watching leftwing policies disproportionately benefit coastal cities and our Nation's largest metro areas while mostly leaving small cities, small towns, suburbs, and rural America behind, the American people wanted a change.

That is exactly what the last 2 years' policies have delivered. Historic tax reform delivered higher take-home pay and helped breathe life into the engine of American job creation and innovation. Landmark regulatory reform cut burdensome compliance costs for small businesses, reigned in Federal overreach on education policy, and defended Americans' rights of conscience.

So what are these policies doing for the American people? I think the answer is pretty clear. All those Americans who had been struggling to find work? Well, today a higher percentage of Americans are working than were ever working at any point under President Obama. For the first time in modern recorded history, we have reached and stayed at a level where there are more job openings nationwide than Americans looking for jobs.

Listen to these headlines: "Employers' Hiring Push Brings Workers Off the Bench." "Disability Applications Plunge as the Economy Strengthens."

Listen to this, from one news article:

The tighter labor market is delivering opportunities to a broad swath of workers who were disproportionately affected by the last recession. Unemployment has fallen sharply for blacks, Latinos, younger workers and those without a college education . . . [and] the deeper jobs pool has been particularly crucial for improving the economic outlook for disabled Americans.

These and many more Americans have been able to find work, but what about Americans who already had jobs but felt like their families were treading water and needed to get ahead?

Last year, the amount of money employers spent compensating American workers—those already working—grew

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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at its fastest pace in more than 10 years. Thanks to tax reform, when many working families and small businesses file under the new Tax Code, they will see less of their money has been sent off to the IRS.

So there are more jobs to choose from, more wage growth, and higher take-home pay following tax cuts, but it is also worth looking at where this new prosperity is going.

The last administration's leftwing policies disproportionately benefited the Nation's largest metropolitan areas. It turns out, policies dreamt up in places like New York and San Francisco worked pretty well in places like New York and San Francisco, but the rest of the country decided we could do better.

Today businesses on Main Street and family farms are dusting off their "Help Wanted" signs. Smaller cities and States like Indiana, Nebraska, and Ohio have so many job openings that some of these communities are offering sizeable cash bonuses to move there. Smaller communities and rural America recently outpaced the rest of the country in relative job creation. So it is an all-American comeback, and the kinds of places liberal policies left behind are now at the front of the pack.

I have focused this morning on our robust economy. It is helping American families lift themselves higher, but it is just one part of the success story the President will be able to tell tonight.

The last 2 years have seen the White House and the Congress work together to identify pressing national challenges and to develop big bipartisan compromise solutions to attack them head-on. Working together, both parties collaborated on more than a dozen targeted measures to improve access to quality care for our Nation's veterans and passed landmark legislation to help local communities heal the wounds created by opioid addiction.

I am delighted to have one of these local champions as my guest tonight. Lisa Minton is leading on the frontlines of Kentucky's battle against opioid abuse. She runs the Chrysalis House, a treatment facility for pregnant and new mothers fighting addiction in Lexington.

In 2017, I worked with Lisa to secure a \$2.6 million grant to expand their services for low-income women and their children. I am glad she will be in the House Chamber this evening, and I am proud to highlight her amazing work this morning.

Working together, a bipartisan majority ended the harmful spending caps that hampered military readiness and made major progress restoring regular order appropriations on behalf of the American taxpayer. A bipartisan majority delivered commonsense relief for local lenders on Main Street from the burden of regulations designed for Wall Street.

These are just a few examples, and it is a good thing we know we can tap into that bipartisan spirit because the

American people did not hire us to spend the next 2 years in total gridlock. That is not what they did. When the American people elect divided government, they are saying: We know you disagree on a lot of things, but look to the things you agree on and do those.

If the past few weeks have shown anything, it is that we need to work together across the aisle in order to do our work, and make no mistake, there are significant challenges ahead, such as addressing the ongoing security and humanitarian crisis at our southern border, lowering the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs, and taking further steps to rebuild America's infrastructure.

Tonight I expect the President will offer a serious vision to deal with challenges like these. I look forward to hearing from him and then, throughout the coming year, I look forward to the Senate working closely with him and working closely with each other across the aisle to do just that.

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.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam 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.

STATE OF THE UNION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, later this evening, in front of a joint session of Congress, President Trump will report on the state of our Union. As is tradition, the President will that say the state of our Union is strong, but the American people know the truth. Unfortunately, it is not.

The American people know that the Trump economy is failing the middle class and those struggling to get there. In Trump's economy, multinational corporations and the already-wealthy were given a tax cut, while American workers were left behind. The Federal Reserve reports that over 40 percent of Americans would have trouble covering an emergency of just \$400. Forty percent of working Americans, middle-class Americans, are just one medical bill, one unexpected car accident, one missed paycheck away from financial uncertainty. The state of the Trump economy—failing the middle class.

The President will say that the state of our Union is strong, but the American people know that the state of the Trump healthcare system is failing American families. After 2 years of relentless sabotage by the Trump administration and congressional Republicans, premiums are higher than they

should be, copays are higher than they should be, and for the first time in 8 years, fewer Americans have health insurance than the year before. The state of the Trump healthcare system—failing the middle class.

The President will say that the state of our Union is strong, but the American people know that the state of the Trump administration is in chaos. No administration has had as much Cabinet turnover as the Trump administration in over a century. Key positions are unfilled or uncovered or covered by individuals in an acting capacity—the Chief of Staff, the Attorney General, the Defense Secretary, the Interior Secretary, the OMB Director, and the EPA Director. Of the 705 top positions in the government, in close to one-fifth, the President hasn't even nominated somebody. The state of the Trump administration—chaos.

The President will say that the state of our Union is strong, but the state of the Trump foreign policy is woefully backward. It is inside out. Our allies are alienated and criticized. Our adversaries are emboldened and praised. Dictators and strongmen are given license by this administration, while our NATO allies receive harsh words. American values—free speech, free elections, freedom of the press, humanitarian rights, civil rights—go undefended in the dark corners of the world. The state of the Trump foreign policy—woefully backward.

The state of the Union is not strong. The state of the Trump economy—failing America's middle class. The state of the Trump healthcare—failing American families. The state of the Trump administration—chaos. The state of the Trump foreign policy—woefully backward, inside out.

These are not the total extent of our Nation's challenges, but even on these four metrics—the economy, healthcare, governance, and foreign policy—the state of our Union is in need of drastic repair. Still, knowing this President and his penchant for hyperbole, he will probably say that the state of our Union is stronger than it has ever been before in our Nation's long history, thanks to him. Knowing this President, he will rely on distortions and made-up facts to mislead the American people. The only question about the President's State of the Union is, How often will he distort? How often will he make up facts? How often will he resort to fear and divisiveness? And if past States of the Union are prologue, he will do that far too many times.

Knowing this President, he will then make some bold new promises and not even make an attempt to fulfill them. The man has so little integrity that a promise he makes at the State of the Union means nothing the next morning. Allow me to mention just a few of the things the President said in previous State of the Union Addresses.

Do you remember this one? In his first address to a joint session, President Trump said: "Education is the