

Government revenues since the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act have exceeded projections by roughly half a trillion dollars. An end to corporate inversions, which is the practice of moving U.S. company operations overseas for tax purposes. Practically every aspect of the U.S. economy was strengthened by this pro-growth legislation.

Contrary to what my friends across the aisle like to claim, it was middle-class families, not wealthy Americans, who received the largest proportional benefit of the tax cuts.

Now, let me just repeat that. It was middle-class families, not wealthy Americans, who received the largest proportional benefit of the tax cuts.

Working families benefited from this legislation. Working families ended up with more money in their pockets. Working families had more breathing room because of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Anyone who pretends that this wasn't the case is either ignorant of the law or being deliberately deceptive.

The income tax cuts for individuals are expiring at the end of this year, along with a key small business tax cut called the section 199A passthrough deduction.

And one of our top priorities for this year is extending this tax relief—but not just extending it, making it permanent.

As I and several other Finance Committee Republicans noted last week in a letter on this subject, "A temporary extension of these pro-growth and pro-family policies is a missed opportunity. Businesses need certainty while investing in their companies and taxpayers should not fear tax hikes due to congressional inaction."

That is it in a nutshell. Hard-working Americans shouldn't have to live in fear of a tax hike every few years, and businesses need a clear picture of the tax outlook so that they can plan for the long term.

Making the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act permanent would protect hard-working families from uncertainty and ensure that they can keep more money in their pockets, and it would have significant economic long-term benefits.

The National Federation of Independent Business reports that making the small business section 199A deduction permanent would result in the creation of an additional 1.2 million jobs annually, with that number climbing as the law goes on.

And the Tax Foundation reports that long-run gross domestic product would increase by a substantial 1.1 percent. The President has called for making the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act permanent, and I am committed to ensuring any tax bill we consider does exactly that.

We have a real opportunity to improve the lives of Americans both here and now and for the long term, and we can't waste it.

Needless to say, drafting major tax legislation takes time. Senator CRAPO, the chairman for the Finance Committee, has been doing an incredible

job of laying the groundwork for a permanent Tax Cuts and Jobs Act extension, but there is still substantial work left to do to arrive at a bicameral agreement. We have to take the time to get it and do it right.

As we continue to move full steam ahead on this key part of the President's agenda, however, there are other pressing priorities that need to be addressed immediately.

When the President's border czar was here last week, he emphasized that the administration cannot sustain its effort to deport criminals here illegally without additional funding. And the last thing that we want is to delay other parts of the President's agenda, like border security, while we do the work needed to arrive at a tax agreement that can pass both Houses of Congress.

That is why the Senate is moving forward on a two-part legislative plan to accomplish our—and the President's—top priorities.

The first bill we consider will address immediate needs like securing the border and other key national security priorities. The second will focus on making tax relief permanent.

The budget resolution we are taking up this week will address the border security part of the equation, and then we will take up a second budget resolution for the tax portion. I want to thank Chairman GRAHAM for doing the work to get today's resolution to the floor, and I look forward to passing it later this week.

I look forward to taking up that second budget resolution as well in the not-too-distant future to prevent a \$4 trillion tax hike on hard-working Americans and making the individual and small business tax relief from the Tax Cuts and Job Acts permanent.

I yield the floor.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Patel nomination be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 23, Kashyap Patel, of Nevada, to be Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a term of ten years.

John Thune, John R. Curtis, Steve Daines, Tim Sheehy, Marsha Blackburn, Eric Schmitt, John Boozman, James E. Risch, Mike Crapo, Tommy Tuberville, Mike Rounds, Roger F. Wicker, Jim Justice, Markwayne

Mullin, John Barrasso, Cindy Hyde-Smith, James Lankford.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Kashyap Patel, of Nevada, to be Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a term of ten years, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 60 Leg.]

YEAS—51

Banks	Grassley	Moreno
Barrasso	Hagerty	Mullin
Blackburn	Hawley	Murkowski
Britt	Hoeben	Paul
Budd	Husted	Ricketts
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Risch
Cassidy	Johnson	Rounds
Cornyn	Justice	Schmitt
Cotton	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cramer	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Crapo	Lee	Sheehy
Cruz	Lummis	Sullivan
Curtis	Marshall	Thune
Daines	McConnell	Tillis
Ernst	McCormick	Tuberville
Fischer	Moody	Wicker
Graham	Moran	Young

NAYS—47

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Baldwin	Hirono	Sanders
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Collins	Luján	Smith
Coons	Markey	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warnock
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Gallego	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	

NOT VOTING—2

Boozman Fetterman

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 47.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Kashyap Patel, of Nevada, to be Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a term of ten years.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

RETIREMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I have never liked calling too much attention to today's date, February 20, but I figured my birthday would be as good a day as any to share with our colleagues a decision I made last year.

During my time in the Senate, I have only really answered to two constituencies: the Republican conference and the people of Kentucky. Over the years, that first group trusted me to coordinate campaigns, to count votes, to steer committees, to take the majority, and, on nine occasions, to lead our conference.

Serving as the Republican leader was a rare and, yes, rather specific childhood dream, and just about a year ago, I thanked my colleagues for their confidence which allowed me to fulfill it.

To the distinguished Members of this body I have had the privilege to lead, I remain deeply, deeply grateful.

Today, however, it is appropriate for me to speak about an even deeper allegiance and an even longer standing gratitude.

Seven times, my fellow Kentuckians have sent me to the Senate. Every day in between, I have been humbled by the trust they have placed in me to do their business right here. Representing our Commonwealth has been the honor of a lifetime. I will not seek this honor an eighth time. My current term in the Senate will be my last.

I have been a student of history my entire life. I can't remember the last time I didn't have a stack of biographies or political memoirs on my nightstand, and I know well how tempting it can be to read history with a sense of determinism: assuming that, somehow, notorious failures were inevitable; that crowning triumphs were predestined; and in either case, that lives and careers followed orderly paths.

This isn't, of course, how things work, and I have never had to look further than my own life to recognize it. I have never lost sight of the fact that without my mother's devoted care, a childhood encounter with polio could have turned out a lot worse; that unless my father hadn't taken a job in the Bluegrass State, my politics might have run a course somewhere else; that if it weren't for an eleventh-hour, outside-the-box idea on the campaign trail, my Senate career would have been over before it began; or that if not for the people of Kentucky time and again agreeing that leadership delivers and electing to send me back here, it would have been someone else from somewhere else taking that seat at the table where I have had a chance to work, strategize, fight, and win.

I grew up reading about the greatness of Henry Clay, but there were times when the prospect of etching my name into his desk in this Chamber felt like more of a long shot than making it to the Major Leagues. I got a front row seat to the greatness of Senator John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky as a summer intern in his office; but in so many moments in my early career, the idea of following in his footsteps felt more distant than the Moon.

So the only appropriate thing to take away today, apart from a healthy dose of pride, is my immense gratitude for

the opportunity to take part in the consequential business of the Senate and the Nation; gratitude to the people I represent—Kentucky's families and farmers and miners and servicemembers and small business owners; gratitude to loyal friends, dedicated volunteers, and talented staff, who have helped me serve much better; gratitude to this institution that has repaid my devotion so generously over the years and to so many colleagues who have become great friends; gratitude for my family's support and, in particular, to my ultimate teammate and confidante over the last 32 years. Elaine's leadership and wise counsel, in their own right, have made her the most seasoned Cabinet official in modern history. On top of all that, her devotion to me and to Kentucky is a lot more than I deserve.

When I arrived in this Chamber, I wasn't coming with a Governor's statewide executive experience or a House Member's appreciation for Washington dynamics. I knew my hometown of Louisville, and I had spent the previous few years working hard to learn what mattered to folks all across the rest of the Commonwealth.

And yet, within weeks of swearing the oath, sure enough, I was here on the floor talking with colleagues from other far-flung corners of the country, discussing solutions to a farm income crisis and infrastructure challenges that affected different States in the same ways.

I learned quickly that delivering for Kentucky meant finding the ways the Commonwealth's challenges were actually tied to national debates: seeing to it that major agriculture legislation remembered Kentucky farmers, particularly including when they needed extraordinary assistance, like the tobacco buyout; making sure that nationwide steps on transportation infrastructure included resources for modernizing the Brent Spence Bridge, which supports billions of dollars in economic activity in Kentucky and the surrounding region; and, with the trust of the local community, finishing a task first assigned by President Reagan: the safe destruction of America's legacy chemical weapons at the Blue Grass Army Depot.

So efforts like these have spanned the length of my Senate career, and I have been humbled by each and every opportunity to help Kentucky punch above its weight.

Of course, the Senate has to grapple with foundational questions that reach even more broadly across American life and even further into posterity. We are trusted, on behalf of the American people, to participate in the appointment of the Federal judiciary, to be the final check on the assembly of power in the courts, beyond the reach of representative politics, and to ensure that the men and women who preside over them profess authentic devotion to the rule of law above all else.

When Members of this body ignore, discount, or pervert this fundamental

duty, they do so not just at the peril of the Senate but of the whole Nation. The weight of our power to advise and consent has never been lost on me, and I have been honored to perform my role in confirming judges who understand their role.

On this floor, there is no place to hide from the obligations of article I, the Senate's unique relationship with article III, or our role in equipping the powers of article II. Here, every debate over agriculture or infrastructure or education or taxes is downstream of the obligations of national security. Every question of policy here at home is contingent on our duty to provide for the common defense.

One of the first times I spoke at length on this floor as a freshman, I was compelled to join the debate over strengthening the deterrence of America's nuclear triad. Whether to expand the U.S. military's hard-target nuclear capability was an interesting question to pose to someone whose most recent job had been running a county government.

But there, of course, was the Founders' brilliance at work: The hopes and dreams of every American are tied up in our ability to protect and defend the Nation and its interests. Every family traveling abroad and every worker and small business owner whose livelihood depends on foreign trade, they depend in turn on the credibility of America's commitments to friends and the strength of her threats to enemies.

In turn, the safety and success of the men and women who volunteer to serve this great Nation in uniform depend on the work we do here to ensure that enemies think twice—twice—before challenging them and those enemies never face a fair fight. Thanks to Ronald Reagan's determination, the work of strengthening America's hard power was well underway when I arrived in the Senate. But since then, we have allowed that power to atrophy, and, today, a dangerous world threatens to outpace the work of rebuilding it.

So lest any of our colleagues still doubt my intentions for the remainder of my term, I have some unfinished business to attend to.

In our work, most of us in this body develop an appreciation for the Senate itself—its written rules, its collegial norms, its pace of play. Yet so often I have watched colleagues depart, venting their frustration at the confines of the institution or mourning what they perceive to be the decline of its norms.

Regardless—regardless—of the political storms that may wash over this Chamber during the time I have remaining, I assure our colleagues that I will depart with great hope for the endurance—the endurance—of the Senate as an institution.

There are any number of reasons for pessimism, but the strength of the Senate is not one of them. This Chamber is still the haven where the political minority can require debate. It is still the crucible in which jurists are tested for

their fidelity to upholding the Constitution and laws as they were written. The Senate is still equipped for work of great consequence. And to the disappointment of my critics, I am still here on the job.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Members and staff and spectators in the Gallery be allowed to applaud for a period not to exceed 30 seconds.

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

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGERTY). The Senator from Illinois.

NOMINATION OF KASHYAP PATEL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in about 2 hours, the Senate will vote on whether to confirm Kash Patel to serve as Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for the next 10 years—10 years. If Senate Republicans confirm Mr. Patel, I believe they will come to regret this vote—probably sooner rather than later.

I, for one, am convinced that Mr. Patel has neither the experience, the judgment, nor the temperament to lead this amazing criminal investigative Agency. It appears my Senate Republican colleagues are ignoring the many redflags in Mr. Patel's record, probably because they fear retribution from the President and Mr. Musk.

Let me be clear: This is not a partisan issue. During my time in the Senate, I have voted for four FBI Director nominations before this one. Each one was clearly a Republican, and I voted for them nevertheless. Historically, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been apolitical.

I oppose Mr. Patel because he is dangerously politically extreme. He has repeatedly expressed his intention to use our Nation's most important law enforcement Agency to retaliate against his political enemies. Even before President Trump took office, Mr. Patel announced that he would force out FBI Director Chris Wray, whom he nominated in his first term before firing former FBI Director Jim Comey.

The Director is the only political appointment at the FBI.

Congress took steps to ensure that this Agency remains as apolitical as possible by providing for a single term of 10 years for Director and subjecting the appointment to the advice and consent of the Senate. Fifty years ago, we made this reform. We may see it all fall to ashes today.

As we have seen for weeks now, the Trump administration's purge of the FBI is a political exercise that has spread to service career officials. There is the FBI Agents Association, and the two leaders of that association came to see me recently in my office to talk about the situation.

Both of them are women. One is serving 17 years in the career job at the FBI and the other, 22. They were quick

to add that their fathers had been FBI agents before that. It was clearly in their blood. They came to tell me about the situation at the FBI today because of this transition and because of the prospect of Kash Patel heading their Agency.

They said morale has never been lower. They have gone through many Presidential transitions and have never seen anything like this. The declaration that is required now of FBI agents is to whether they will participate in the investigation of the January 6 rioters who assaulted this United States Capitol Building.

Let's be honest about what is going on here. There is an effort to have Soviet-style historical revision. The Trump administration and the people they are pushing into leadership have to, basically, pass a loyalty of—in terms of the outcome of the previous Presidential election and what happened on January 6.

They are somehow asked to ignore the obvious that we see on the videotape over and over again. The rioters that assaulted this Capitol are so dangerous that the Vice President of the United States sitting in your chair was physically removed by the Secret Service for fear that he was going to be hurt if he stayed in his position.

Those of us who were on the floor of the Senate on January 6 were asked to evacuate this Chamber as quickly as possible. This was not simply a question of tourists getting out of line. These people who assaulted this U.S. Capitol Building were hell-bent on stopping the constitutional process of counting the electoral votes in the 2020 election.

And now the FBI and others are being asked to say the opposite, that this wasn't somehow a breach of law, a horrendous, terrible chapter in the history of this country, and that there was danger afoot.

Because the President has given a sweeping pardon for the 1,600 that were prosecuted for trespass, seditious conspiracy, and use of firearms in the Capitol and the like, we are supposed to somehow discount this as a significant moment in American history. It was.

For the FBI agents who participated in the investigation of that day, I say they were doing their job, they did it well, and now to remove them from the FBI because of that has obviously hurt the morale of the FBI Agency. When you stop and wonder what the future holds for them if another President comes in with another political agenda, will they be victims again?

As we have seen for weeks now, the Trump administration's purge of the FBI is a political exercise that has spread to senior current officials. In the FBI's long, long history, this has never happened before. This purge has dramatically weakened the FBI's ability to combat national security threats and make America less safe.

Senior leaders with collectively hundreds of years of experience have been

forced out, creating a leadership vacuum. Thousands of line agents fear losing their jobs simply because they were assigned to work on cases involving the January 6 attack by President Trump.

I have heard directly from FBI agents who now fear for their safety and the safety of their families. To understand why, let me tell you about a January 6 rioter named Edward Kelley. Mr. Kelley was convicted of assaulting law enforcement during the attack on the U.S. Capitol. We saw it, didn't we, in terms of the videotapes that showed our law enforcement agents trying to stand their ground of this Capitol Building being beaten back and assaulted by these mobs?

Mr. Kelley was convicted of assault on law enforcement, and he was given a full and unconditional pardon by Donald Trump. But Mr. Kelley has also been convicted in his home State of Tennessee of conspiracy to murder the FBI agents who investigated his role in the January 6 attack.

Understand this: Now he is arguing that President Trump's blanket pardon—Mr. Kelley—should cover his attempt to kill FBI agents.

When asked about the possible firings of career FBI officials at his confirmation hearing, Mr. Patel under oath—under oath—said “I don't know what's going on right now,” at the FBI.

Mr. President, that is not true. Thanks to multiple brave whistleblowers, we now know that Mr. Patel likely committed perjury in making that statement. Even before being confirmed as an FBI Director, Mr. Patel is already directing the ongoing purge of honorable, career public servants, despite his status as a private citizen. He has no right to be part of this awful process.

I urge my Republican colleagues to seriously consider these credible whistleblower allegations before you vote on Mr. Patel's nomination.

Mr. Patel's claim about an FBI purge were not his only misleading statements under oath. At his hearing, Mr. Patel implausibly told me he could not recall Stew Peters, a man who has been identified as an anti-Semitic Holocaust denier.

I asked him repeatedly: What about Stew Peters?

Don't know the man, don't recognize the name.

This is simply not true, considering that Mr. Patel appeared on Mr. Peters' podcast eight times, Mr. President—eight times and he couldn't recall the man's name.

Mr. Peters has since revealed that he and Mr. Patel directly communicate via their personal cell phones “constantly”—“constantly” was the word he used. As far as Patel is concerned under oath: Never heard of the man.

Why in the world would he do that? Why wouldn't Mr. Patel admit the obvious—eight podcasts and constant communication with this man. And an even larger question: What is he doing as the man who wants to direct the FBI