

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

CENTRAL TEXAS FLOODS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I begin, I just want to say that I join Americans around the country in praying for the victims of the torrential flooding in Texas this weekend. More than 100 have been reported dead—among them, at least 28 children. It is a moment of unfathomable pain for so many, and my prayers are with the grieving parents and the grieving families.

I am grateful for the efforts of the rescue workers, military members, and volunteers who put themselves in harm's way to rescue flood victims. And it would be wrong to acknowledge rescuers without also mentioning the everyday Americans who died in the floods trying to save others, like the camp director who died trying to get his campers to safety.

The Scriptures say:

A greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

These are the people we would all hope to be at the moment of our testing.

Again, my thoughts and prayers are with all the victims of these deadly floods and with those who continue to work to rescue them.

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, in the runup to last year's elections, Republicans made some promises to the American people. We promised to turn the page on the failures of the last 4 years, to help working families and to get our economy moving, to make our country stronger and more secure. Last week, we delivered legislation that will help fulfill those promises. That starts with permanent tax relief for hard-working Americans.

Back in 2017, during the first Trump administration, Republicans passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, legislation that cut Americans' tax rates, doubled the child tax credit, and nearly doubled the standard deduction. But without action from Congress, a substantial part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act would have expired this year, and that would have meant a huge tax hike for hard-working Americans—some \$2,500 for people in my State of South Dakota.

We were determined not to let that happen—not next year, not ever—and I am proud that our bill permanently extends all of the individual tax relief from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. That means lower tax rates for every income level, permanently, an enhanced \$2,200 child tax credit that is now linked to inflation, and the higher standard deduction.

And we did more than that. We included no tax on overtime, no tax on

tips, an even bigger standard deduction for seniors, and new investment accounts that will help the next generation get a running start on their American dream. In a word, the American people will be able to keep more of their hard-earned money instead of sending it to the Federal Government in Washington, and they will have the freedom to spend, invest, and save more of their own money how they see fit.

In addition to providing permanent relief for American families, our bill is about getting our economy moving again. The 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act had our economy firing on all cylinders: more jobs, higher wages, companies large and small investing in America. The 2017 tax cuts transformed the Tax Code so that it would encourage growth, and it worked, but not all of that reform was permanent until now.

Now, with the bill we passed last week, all of the 2017 pro-growth reforms are a permanent fixture of our Tax Code. That includes lower rates for small- and medium-sized businesses, the job-creating 199A small business deduction, and investment incentives that free up cash for small businesses, farmers, and ranchers to invest in their operations and in their employees. And, once again, we went even further than the 2017 reforms. We included full expensing for new factories and factory improvements to fuel economic growth and made-in-America goods and jobs.

And we included an even higher death tax threshold that will spare more family farms, ranches, and businesses from a potentially devastating tax, not to mention the expense of planning for it.

Any bill that is about a stronger, more prosperous America would be incomplete if it didn't make America's farmers and ranchers stronger. Agriculture is the lifeblood of this country, but the last few years have been incredibly challenging for our agricultural producers. Our bill tackles those challenges head-on by bolstering programs that farmers and ranchers depend upon. It raises reference prices for every covered commodity; it expands crop insurance coverage and affordability; and it supports risk management, disaster assistance, conservation programs, and critical research and disease prevention programs that are essential to a robust agriculture sector.

With this bill, Republicans are also making America more secure. We are ending the era of open borders by making a generational investment in border security. We are finally finishing the border wall. We are hiring more border agents and giving them the tools they need to keep illegal immigrants and illegal drugs out of our country. And we are hiring more ICE officers and enhancing our capacity to detain and deport criminal illegal immigrants who have taken up residence in our country.

We are also making a major investment to bolster our national defense and build a military that can defeat the threats of today and tomorrow. We are boosting shipbuilding, expanding our Air Force fleet, and investing in drones and counterdrone technology. We are restoring our defense production capacity so that we can make more munitions here in America. We are protecting the homeland with missile defense and nuclear modernization—and more. Our bill is no substitute for robust yearly defense funding, but it gives us a head start on the long-term investments necessary to turn our readiness deficiencies around and ensure that America's military is the strongest in the world for years to come.

One often overlooked part of our national security is our energy security, and our legislation will help ensure that America has a reliable and affordable energy supply for the long term. Our bill also helps deliver on Republicans' promise of a smaller and smarter government. Our bill achieves \$1½ trillion in Byrd-compliant savings, including the first real entitlement reform in decades—reform that will put the programs in question on a more sustainable path for today's recipients and for tomorrow's.

I am proud that Republicans are delivering on our promises to the American people, and I can't wait to see our policies begin working to help build a safer, a stronger, and a more prosperous country. It is going to be great. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative 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.

CENTRAL TEXAS FLOODS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today, the Senate's thoughts and prayers are with all the victims' families and communities devastated by the flash floods in Texas.

The reports from Texas were both heartbreaking and terrifying at the same time—water rising over 25 feet in a matter of minutes, entire buildings and homes swept away, hundreds of people stranded.

As of this morning, 105 people have died during the floods—27 children. To see the pictures of those children, the little beautiful faces, which I saw published in one of our New York papers this morning, just breaks your heart and stays with you—and the agony, of

course, of those in their families who survived.

Of course, the search continues for many more, and we hope and pray more will be found alive. I thank all of the first responders on the ground. And we all hope for the best in the ongoing rescue and recovery efforts.

Now, when a tragedy as devastating as the one in Texas occurs, the American people deserve to know what happened, what more could have been done to minimize the tragedy, and what we can do better to prevent this from happening again. That means taking a close look what went wrong, if anything, at the Agency level. So, yesterday, I asked for an investigation into what role, if any, the administration's staff cuts to local National Weather Service stations played in preparedness and response to the Texas tragedy.

We also must look forward as communities rebuild, as families mourn. We must ensure the Federal Government has all the resources in place to aid those in need, and that means holding off against devastating cuts to Agencies like FEMA.

As recently as last month, Donald Trump talked about "wean[ing] off" FEMA and has toyed with eliminating the Agency entirely as soon as this year. That would be a mistake at any time, but in light of these horrible floods, it is unthinkable that Donald Trump would do something like put FEMA's future in doubt.

As communities rebuild, today would be a good day for Donald Trump to back away from his threats to dismantle FEMA. Any one of us who has visited these terrible hurricanes and floods and so much other in terms of natural destruction sees the job FEMA does. They are dedicated, they are hard-working, and they are there for people at the exact time people desperately need them. To eliminate this Agency? It speaks to someone who doesn't know anything about what they do.

We all know that nothing can bring back the lives of those who perished, but the administration can and must ensure it takes every step, including funding FEMA—not eliminating it, not cutting it in two-thirds, but funding it fully—the administration must do that to ensure that it takes every step possible to prevent a tragedy like this from happening again.

RESCISSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the July work period and rescissions—this July 4, Donald Trump and Republicans wreaked havoc on our country. On a day when Americans are supposed to celebrate our independence and our blessings as citizens of this great Nation, Donald Trump signed one of the most destructive pieces of legislation in modern history—the biggest giveaway to billionaires ever, the biggest cuts to Medicaid, devastation to our healthcare economy and America's

clean energy economy, with millions of projected job losses—so many job losses that it could well cause us to fall into recession. When it is harder to find jobs, more people get fired, and prices go up.

This vote will haunt our Republican colleagues. It will haunt them every time a rural hospital closes. It will haunt them every time seniors are unable to get home care. It will haunt them as premiums go up, as the uninsured rates spike, as kids go hungry, as jobs disappear, and as our adversaries grow stronger while America grows weaker.

Frankly, many Republicans knew perfectly well their own bill would hurt people back at home. Yet they voted yes anyway. Why? It is simple to answer that. Why did they vote yes anyway when they knew it was wrong? Because they are afraid of Donald Trump.

Now we return to session at the start of a new work period. Very soon, Senate Republicans are expected to bring to the floor at Donald Trump's behest a so-called rescissions package that will gut critical investments in public broadcasting and weaken America's standing abroad, on a simple majority vote—not the 60 votes required traditionally as appropriations bills move forward. Will Senate Republicans bow down to Donald Trump yet again or will they actually show backbone and stand up for their constituents?

These investments were negotiated on a bipartisan basis between Democrats and Republicans as part of the government funding process, and with a simple majority vote, Republicans could take away the investments they all voted for—many of them voted for and renege on their word and spoil—the bipartisan appropriations process. That is a road Senate Republicans would be wise not to go down.

If Republicans cave to Donald Trump and gut these investments agreed to by both parties, that would be an affront—a huge affront—to the bipartisan appropriations process. It is absurd to expect Democrats to play along with funding the government if Republicans are just going to renege on a bipartisan agreement by concocting rescissions packages behind closed doors that can pass with only their votes—not the customary 60 votes required in the appropriations process. The 60-vote process almost always ensures bipartisanship.

Worse, there are alarming reports that Donald Trump plans to bring additional rescissions packages down the line to codify the DOGE. These rescissions may be small compared to the rescissions they will put on the floor later. Look at the new budget that Trump has proposed.

There have also been reports that OMB Director Russell Vought—and perhaps the President himself—promised hard-right Republicans in the House additional cuts on programs they detest as a way to secure the votes for their big, ugly bill. These cuts

may be unlawful if the reports prove true.

This is not a bait and switch; it is a bait and poison to kill. It is not a bait and switch; it is a bait and poison to kill. This is deeply troubling and will threaten to further poison bipartisanship—a crucial ingredient for this institution to function.

I urge Senate Republicans to press "pause" on their partisan rescission package and instead work with Democrats on a bipartisan appropriations process to fund the government. That bipartisan process has begun in the Appropriations Committee, and I am hopeful more progress will be made later this week as the committee begins their markups on the first three bills.

So, again, Senate Republicans have a choice to make. They can keep bowing to Donald Trump. They can continue walking on eggshells, trying not to upset him, giving him what he wants even at the cost of breaking the law and hurting the people back home. Or they can do their jobs. They can stand up to Donald Trump and reject this rescission package that would gut funding for critical programs with a simple majority vote. They can work with Democrats on a bipartisan, good-faith negotiation to fund the government later this year.

This is not just about one rescission package. This is not just about one appropriations process, as important as those are. This is about the role of Congress as a coequal branch with the Executive, as the Founding Fathers proposed. Most importantly, this is about protecting the well-being of Americans back home.

VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the VA workforce—Donald Trump and Secretary Collins are manufacturing a cynical staffing crisis at the Veterans' Administration.

Earlier this year, we learned that Secretary Collins announced plans for a wide-scale, 80,000-plus employee reduction of the workforce at the VA, putting the well-being of our veterans at immediate risk. There was never any transparency for these plans, and many of the decisions were clearly done haphazardly, without thinking through the consequences.

Yesterday, the VA released another alarming announcement, saying they are on pace to lose 30,000 staffers without having to resort to a reduction in force—as if that made things better. They proposed 80,000, and because of huge pressure—mainly from our veterans and our veterans groups—they backed off. But make no mistake about it, a cut of 30,000 will decimate the ability of the VA to provide good healthcare to our veterans, who have risked their lives for us.

Secretary Collins is making the VA so toxic that workers are leaving on their own. The workers—I have talked