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Senate

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of Kevin Warsh of Florida, to be a Member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for a period of fourteen years from February 1, 2026.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, last week, I held 12 Q&As in 12 different counties during our Senate recess. Not in every county, but in some counties, a question like this comes up: What are you going to do about the national debt?

I usually say to the person asking the question: You could have asked me an easier question.

So I come to the floor to speak to an announcement that was made last week—an announcement that ought to scare all Americans but particularly those of us in the Congress of the United States—and it was not a surprise announcement. The United States recently eclipsed a fiscal milestone. At the end of March, the Nation's publicly held debt surpassed the value of all goods and services produced in our economy. Another way to say that is that our national debt as a percentage of our gross national product was more than 100 percent.

Outside of a momentary blip during the pandemic, the Nation hasn't exceeded this mark since 1946. Passing this threshold should be a wake-up call to Congress to get the Nation's fiscal house in order. In 1946, debt relative to the economy hit its peak and precipitously declined thereafter thanks to the end of World War II. Today, it is

just the opposite. Our debt is expected to grow faster than the economy indefinitely, and it ought to be a wake-up call to all of us in the Congress of the United States. In fact, interest on the debt alone is costing American taxpayers \$1 trillion annually, and within 10 years, interest costs will top \$2 trillion a year.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office that does this scoring reminds us with every budget update that this fiscal path is unsustainable.

Economist Herb Stein famously quipped:

If something cannot go on forever, it will stop.

Our debt cannot grow faster than the economy forever. It eventually will stop. The question is, When and how?

We have this choice as Members of Congress representing the people of this country that are very concerned about this situation: We can either work together today to gradually turn the corner or wait until there is a crisis where draconian austerity measures are forced upon us by the national creditors. For the good of the Nation, we must embrace the former option.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. 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 MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

SMALL BUSINESSES

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last week was Small Business Week, and I was glad to be able to host a business roundtable, last Monday, in Aberdeen, SD, and hear directly from small business owners in my State. I was also able to visit the Business and Health

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.

O God, our rock and fortress, we trust the unfolding of Your loving providence.

May our lawmakers find refuge in the shadow of Your citadel. Give our Senators eyes that are willing to see their own mistakes, to be patient with the faults of others, and to persevere until Your purposes are accomplished. May our legislators walk with reverence and sensitivity through life's wind, rain, and sunshine. Lord, give them steadfast hearts as they strive to glorify You. Open their minds to think Your thoughts and their hearts to do Your will.

We pray in your merciful 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ARMSTRONG). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

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



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Innovation Center on the campus of Northern State University, which houses the Northern Innovation and Startup Center that provides support for aspiring entrepreneurs in north-eastern South Dakota.

Small Business Week is an important celebration, but the impact that small businesses have is felt literally every day of the year. Nearly half of Americans in the private sector work for a small business. Small businesses are responsible for a majority of the new jobs in this country, and a lot of Americans' first jobs were at a small business, mine included.

There is nothing small about the impact that small businesses have in our country, and Republicans know that any path to economic strength runs through small businesses. That is why they were a key focus of the tax relief we delivered in the Working Families Tax Cuts last year. This landmark bill locked in the lower small business tax rates that Republicans enacted in 2017, giving them certainty to plan for the future. It also made the 199A small business deduction permanent.

I have heard positive feedback on 199A across industries in my State. In South Dakota, an agriculture cooperative estimates the impact of this one policy at over \$100 million since 2017, and that money has been able to be passed on to the farmers who are members of that co-op. I am sure that those farmers, like so many small businesses across the country, are relieved that 199A is here to stay.

Mr. President, 199A is just one of the policies in the Working Families Tax Cuts that help free up money so small businesses can invest in their operations and in their employees. Another is the 100-percent bonus depreciation, which is also now a permanent feature of the Tax Code. Bonus depreciation allows business owners to deduct the full cost of a new piece of equipment the year they start using it, rather than spreading that deduction out piecemeal over several years.

Say you are a farmer, and you need to replace your combine, or you are a manufacturer who needs to upgrade your machinery, or you are a plumber who needs a new truck. Those are all big expenses, especially for a small—maybe even, in some cases, a one-person—operation. So bonus depreciation helps small businesses take on that big expense by allowing them to deduct the entire thing in that 1 year.

And the impact will be significant. In fact, a car dealership in my State was able to build an addition and hire 10 more people because of bonus depreciation.

A lot of our small businesses and farms and ranches in South Dakota are family-run operations. Many of them have been in the family for generations, and the plan is to keep them—keep them—in the family for generations to come. Unfortunately, the death tax has too often threatened these plans. When one generation

passes the business on to the next, the death tax can take a big bite out of it. It can be devastating, forcing families to sell all or part of their family business, farm, or ranch just to satisfy a big tax bill, not to mention the costly estate planning expenses that many families incur to keep their businesses from being ruined by a death tax bill.

I am very proud that the Working Families Tax Cuts protects a lot more family businesses from this unfair tax. In this bill, Republicans permanently raised the exemption threshold on the death tax, and a lot of small business owners, farmers, and ranchers have breathed a sigh of relief that they won't have to worry about losing their livelihoods when they lose a loved one.

Last week was Small Business Week. It was also Travel and Tourism Week. In South Dakota, tourism is one of our leading industries. Last year, 15 million people visited the Mount Rushmore State. They came to see that iconic monument, to see the South Dakota Badlands and the bison herds at Custer State Park. Some came for conferences in Sioux Falls, others for our legendary pheasant hunting.

All told, last year, tourism brought \$5 billion to South Dakota's economy, and I have to think that a lot of that money was spent at our State's small businesses: at our restaurants, coffee shops, and breweries; with tour operators, hunting guides, and outfitters, and many more.

Like the other small businesses in our State, businesses in the tourism industry are benefiting from tax relief in the Working Families Tax Cuts: lower small business tax rates, investment incentives, and the 199A small business deduction.

Some of the most positive feedback I have heard from small business owners about the Working Families Tax Cuts is how much this bill helps their employees. The "no tax on tips" and "no tax on overtime" provisions in this bill are especially—especially—game-changing for folks in hospitality and tourism. That includes waiters and bartenders, of course. It also includes people who work as tour guides, entertainers, and drivers.

Many Americans look forward to the summer for a few days away with their families. For those who work in hospitality and tourism, summer means more customers and more money, and the Working Families Tax Cuts ensures that more of the money they earn stays in their pockets.

Democrats may try to claim the Working Families Tax Cuts was about billionaires, but the American people know the truth. Farmers, ranchers, and small business owners know it is helping them free up money to meet their expenses and invest in their operations and in their employees, and hard-working Americans can see that the Working Families Tax Cuts lets them keep more of their hard-earned money. We call it the Working Families Tax Cuts for a reason, and I am proud to report that working families are benefiting.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 4486

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I understand that there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 4486) to amend title 3, United States Code, to prescribe a process to authorize certain activities at the Executive Residence at the White House, and for other purposes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, in order place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

INFLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, on inflation and the inflation ballroom, inflation is skyrocketing at the fastest pace in 3 years. The American people are hurting, and Donald Trump is to blame. Inflation rose to 3.8 percent in April because of Donald Trump's costly tariffs, his disastrous war with Iran, and failed economic agenda.

So much for Trump's promise to bring down costs on day one—3.8 percent, the highest in 3 years. And, again, it is all because of Trump's tariffs, his war with Iran, his failed economic agenda.

The American people are furious about how Donald Trump and his MAGA majorities in Congress have turned a blind eye to the No. 1 issue facing the American people: their rising costs.

A CNN poll this morning found that 77 percent of Americans say that Trump's policies have raised costs in their community, and that includes a majority of Republicans. Seventy-seven percent, including a majority of Republicans, blame Trump for their higher costs. Only 30 percent of Americans approve of his handling of the economy. That is a record low.

Among the most common words the poll's respondents used to describe their economic situation right now were: uncertainty, stress, dread.

Donald Trump, are you hearing that? The American people look at your economic policies and describe them as filled with uncertainty, fill them with stress, fill them with dread. That is a pretty strong word.

Instead of listening to the American people, Donald Trump and the GOP put forward a reconciliation bill that will