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Senate

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of David Clay Fowlkes, of Arkansas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Arkansas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The great Senator from Iowa.

ISRAELI HOSTAGES

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in March of last year, I spoke here to demand Hamas release all remaining Israeli hostages. In October last year, I spoke about President Trump's Israel-Hamas cease-fire deal. At that time, all of the living hostages had been returned to their families in Israel.

However, the bodies of those who had been murdered under the brutal terror of Hamas were still being held hostage. This was not merely a delay in returning the remains; it was a very deliberate, very psychological warfare tactic, weaponizing human suffering for the political gain of Hamas. This cruelty also prevented families from carrying out proper religious burial rights—a fundamental act of dignity and respect for the dead in Jewish tradition.

Now nearly 3½ months after reaching the cease-fire deal by President Trump, I am here to share that on January 26 this year, the final body of hostages has returned home to Israel. Families who have lived in unbearable uncertainty can now begin the sacred work of mourning, remembrance, and healing.

This moment is a reminder of both the resilience of the Israeli people and the enduring bond between the United States and Israel. America stood firm in demanding the release of every hos-

tage, the living and the fallen, and we must continue to stand firm against those who use terror, brutality, and human suffering as bargaining chips.

I commend President Trump and all those who worked tirelessly to secure this outcome and remain hopeful that a lasting peace can be reached.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, with tax filing season underway, the American people are beginning to feel the impact of the working families tax cuts. They are seeing smaller tax bills, bigger refunds, and more money in their pockets. And perhaps one of the biggest boosts from this law is for the hard-working Americans who will now be able to deduct tips and overtime pay from their taxes.

That is right. Thanks to the working families tax cuts millions of Americans who earn tips and work overtime will see tax relief on that income and save hundreds of dollars on their taxes. Six million Americans claimed tips on their taxes last year, and it is fair to say that for many of these hard-working people, no tax on tips is a game changer.

Tyler, who is a waiter in Nevada, said:

It will be nice to be able, instead of saving for taxes, to be saving for our future.

And he is not alone. Cora, who works at a restaurant in Iowa, echoed that. She said:

In the service industry, too, you're always constantly worried about what that end of the year number is going to be . . . now with this we . . . have some relief with that too.

We are not talking about an inconsequential sum of money. A waitress in California said she owed \$900 in taxes last year.

And Americans who earn tips already have plans where to put their tax savings. Some are planning to put it into

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Our Father in Heaven, in a turbulent world, we turn our eyes to You. At a time when change, decay, and division seem to intimidate, You remain the changeless one.

Mighty God, today, keep our lawmakers within the center of Your will, using them for Your glory. May their daily motive be to permit Your Kingdom to come and Your will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Surround them with the shield of Your divine protection, as You do for them more than they can ask or imagine.

Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all You have done for us.

We pray in Your glorious 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. MULLIN). 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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their education and savings, toward groceries and rent, or as one mother in Michigan said, toward raising her four kids.

Because of the working families tax cuts, when someone puts their tips in their pocket at the end of their shift, their money stays in their pocket.

Republicans' landmark tax relief bill also created the new deduction for overtime pay. Overtime is a significant part of a lot of Americans' incomes: police officers, firefighters, paramedics, nurses, manufacturing workers, and tradespeople. But up until now, the impact of those extra hours and extra wages was muted by taxes—no longer. Now these hard-working Americans will be able to keep more of the money they earn when they spend extra hours away from their loved one, often doing very challenging jobs.

This is especially true for nurses and other healthcare workers for whom overtime is a routine part of their week. One nurse in California said:

Nurses are now asking for overtime, thanks to the no tax on overtime provision.

Whether it is more money for a vacation, for education, or for just paying for day-to-day expenses, the working family tax cuts is a game changer for a lot of Americans. And no tax on tips and overtime is on top of permanently lower tax rates, a higher standard deduction, a \$2,000 tax credit, and so much more. It all adds up to hard-working Americans keeping more of their hard-earned money to spend, invest, and save how they see fit.

Despite all that the working families tax cuts does for middle-income Americans, Democrats are once again peddling the lie that this bill is about tax breaks for billionaires. That obviously is very far from the truth. I have talked about some of the people who are benefiting from this bill today. Not a single one of them is a billionaire. They are not millionaires either. In fact, a lot of the people who are benefiting from the working families tax cuts live paycheck to paycheck. They work every day to have enough money to pay the bills, support their families, and maybe put something away for the future.

That is who Republicans had in mind when we wrote this bill, and that is who is benefiting.

Democrats can say what they want, but the American people are seeing the benefits from this bill with their own eyes.

I yield the floor.

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. 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.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in a podcast interview released yesterday, Donald Trump called for Republicans to "take over voting in 15 States in the country." Trump said:

The Republicans should say, we want to take over. We [want to] take [things] over. Republicans ought to nationalize the voting.

Let me say that again because it is hard to believe that a President of the United States—anyone who believes in democracy, anyone who believes in the Constitution, anyone who believes in this Country—would say it, but Trump said it. Trump said:

Republicans ought to nationalize the voting.

This is more dangerous, autocratic poison from Donald Trump. What does Donald Trump think he ran for—a dictatorship, President for life in a single-party state, where one party runs the elections, like in every other tin-pot dictatorship?

This President clearly doesn't believe in democracy at all. Never in American history have we had a President so hostile to democratic traditions. Even worse, never have we had a President who breaks the norms that have made this country strong and held it together for centuries, and he just slashes them. And people on the other side of the aisle just shrug their shoulders. It is incredible.

Democracy is at risk here from the President of the United States, and the people who might have the most say over him, the Republican Senators, are silent, quaking in their boots that they can never criticize Donald Trump, no matter how outrageous what he says is.

What Donald Trump wants is a one-party MAGA dictatorship. Do you want your kids to grow up in that autocracy? Do you want your kids to grow up in a one-party MAGA dictatorship, which is what Trump is calling for? He wants MAGA to call the shots and MAGA to control the elections.

Democracy trusts the people, but Donald Trump fears the people. He wants to make sure those who disagree with him don't have a voice. He can't stand criticism. Republicans ought to fiercely condemn Donald Trump's vicious attacks against our democratic systems. They are not only vicious; they are dangerous.

Republicans seem to have no problem criticizing Democrats who are trying to make it easier to vote, saying we are trying to nationalize elections. Yet when Donald Trump actually wants the Federal Government to control how elections are run in the States, the Republican Senate is silent as mice.

It is not just Donald Trump's words. If it were just his words, you might shrug your shoulders. It is his actions. He carries these things out—FBI agents raiding election offices in Georgia; Trump ordering his goons to dig up fake evidence of stolen elections and people voting illegally; demanding that States turn over voter rolls to the Department of Justice, which is his own

attack dog; threatening to use the Insurrection Act against States he doesn't like.

We know why Donald Trump is doing this. He is losing support of the American people, and he knows it. So he doesn't want them to vote. He doesn't want them to have power.

The American people are sending his candidates packing at the polls in State after State, most recently in Texas. They are losing elections by dramatic amounts because the people are repudiating Donald Trump.

What is his answer? To try and lower people's costs, to try and reduce the chaos in our cities? Oh, no. Take away people's right to vote. Let Donald Trump and his MAGA goons run the elections.

Democracy, the roots of which tunnel deep into the soil of this great country, has turned against Donald Trump in a truly profound way. We haven't seen anything quite like this, the dramatic drops in the President's popularity and poll numbers. So, of course, what is his answer? What is Trump's answer? Undo democracy itself.

That is the oldest trick in the book of dictators. Just say the elections are fake. Say certain people's votes don't count; your side should control the elections for some made-up reason or another.

Well, we have seen this, again and again, in countries around the world but never in the United States of America, until now. That is what makes Donald Trump's agenda such a danger to the grand American tradition of democracy, because it is only about him and the power he can grab. He doesn't have a single democratic fiber in his being. It is all about Donald Trump, his ego, his power, his self-aggrandizement. That is it. Democracy doesn't matter. The American people don't matter.

I ask my Republican colleagues: When the hell will you find your voice? When he says that we should nationalize the elections and Republicans should take over, and you don't make a peep? What is going on here? You are just so afraid?

This is the path that has ruined many a democracy.

Now, our democracy is deep and strong, but it requires and allows resistance to these things—verbal resistance, electoral resistance. Where are you? When are Republican colleagues going to speak against such brutish autocratic drivel from Trump?

His drive to autocracy is so obvious that any sixth-grade social studies student would recognize what Donald Trump is doing and tell you it is totally against what America is all about.

Republicans, if they think they are going to get the crumbs from Donald Trump's table when he gets his way, they are sadly mistaken. Donald Trump's autocratic instincts will consume everyone, Democrats and Republicans alike.