

our athletes. It was particularly joyous when our gold medal U.S. Olympic hockey team came into the Gallery in their beautiful USA sweaters with their gold medals around their necks so every American who was watching the State of the Union last night could join with them to celebrate this tremendous achievement and to have a moment where America was rejoicing together over something that is so quintessentially a North American sport and a triumph for our Olympic teams.

Today, I want to continue that joyous celebration by congratulating and highlighting and punctuating three Wyoming athletes who were at the U.S. Olympic Games in Italy.

The three are Breezy Johnson, Anna Gibson of Jackson, and Jaelin Kauf of Alta. They did not just compete; they embodied grit, resilience, and the determination that really defines Wyoming. I have no doubt that they inspired every person in Wyoming, especially our young student athletes who watched them on TV.

I was so overjoyed that I got to watch Breezy Johnson's win in realtime. Breezy Johnson got America's medal run off to a tremendous start. Her race was early in the Olympic Games, and she took the gold medal in the women's skiing downhill, racing nearly 80 miles an hour to the finish line. It was an incredible moment for our country—incredible—and a truly incredible moment for Wyoming.

In addition to Breezy's gold medal, she also came home with a fiance. So congratulations to Breezy and Connor. We are so happy for you both.

Jaelin Kauf made history by becoming the most decorated Olympic mogul skier in U.S. history, earning her second and third career silver medals. From learning to ski in Teton Valley to competing on the world's greatest stage, Jaelin's journey reflects years of discipline, perseverance, and unwavering community support.

The strength that is required in your legs to be a mogul skier is absolutely unparalleled. Through two Olympic Games, she has represented Alta and the United States with exceptional courage and joy. We could not be prouder.

Anna Gibson became the very first American to compete in Olympic ski mountaineering—which is a relatively new sport in the Olympics—finishing fourth alongside her partner in a sport she grew up with in Jackson.

Anna demonstrated the courage to step into uncharted territory. As I said, it is a very new sport, and stepping into uncharted territory is a quality Wyoming knows well. So she just did a bangup job representing Wyoming and the United States in our skimo Olympic debut.

These three women remind us that greatness is not born in stadiums, but it is built in gymnasiums and on training courses and on ski mountains and early morning trainings; in weight

rooms, in your diet, your exercise, and particularly in tight-knit communities that support these athletes.

These communities believe in one another. They believe in celebrating each other's hard work. Wyoming has always stood for toughness, independence, and quiet excellence. Breezy, Jaelin, and Anna carried that spirit with them to the world stage. They made Wyoming and the entire country so proud. We are lucky to call them ours.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise alongside my friend and colleague Senator LUMMIS to celebrate these three talented Olympians: Breezy Johnson, Jaelin Kauf, and Anna Gibson. The 2026 Olympic Games were the most successful winter games in our Nation's history.

Team USA won an astonishing 12 gold medals. It is the most gold medals our country has ever won in the Winter Olympics. America brought home the second most medals of any country—33 medals overall. This was a record-setting year for Team USA, and Wyoming is no small part of the success.

Breezy started the historic medal run that first day by winning our Nation's first gold medal of the 2026 Games by winning women's downhill alpine skiing. Her victory comes just 4 years after she was forced to withdraw from the 2022 Olympics due to injuries, injuries sustained on the very mountain that she conquered in 2026.

Her comeback is an inspiring story for every young American who aspires to a day as an Olympic athlete.

Jaelin Kauf was next. She took home two silver medals in mogul skiing. She is now a three-time Olympic silver medalist, and that makes her the most decorated mogul skier in U.S. Olympic history.

And everyone in Wyoming is so, so very proud of Anna Gibson. Look at that—the determination, the look in her. And what a sport it is. As Senator LUMMIS just said, this is the first year for ski mountaineering in the Olympics, and it was Anna's first Olympics ever. She made history as the first American woman to compete in ski mountaineering at the Olympic Winter Games. She finished in fourth place and accomplished this even though, incredibly, she picked up this event only a few months ago. I will tell you, she is a trailblazer, as are all of these Olympic athletes.

Watching her event on Saturday, I saw a Wyoming flag waving in the crowd and cheering her on. The people of Wyoming always show up for one another. You know, in Wyoming, we follow the Cowboy Code: Live each day with courage, take pride in your work, and do what needs to be done.

So congratulations to our Wyoming Olympic champions. They have done so much to make history. We are so very proud of all of them. They make our State and our Nation very proud.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the DeLeeuw nomination.

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

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as the whole world knows, yesterday evening President Trump gave his State of the Union Address. It is one of our country's finest traditions that the President personally gives an update to the American people on what he has done over the last year, before a joint session of Congress, and what he intends to do in the future. It was an exciting night, with Members of the House, Senate, and the Supreme Court gathered, along with our military leadership, to hear about the impressive year that we have had under President Trump here in the Congress and, of course, at the White House.

And as we just heard from our friends from Wyoming, we had an appearance from the U.S.A.'s men's hockey team, who recently won the gold medal at the Olympics. And the President recognized, appropriately so, so many of our Nation's heroes in a tremendous display of patriotism that, I know, I welcomed.

Unfortunately, many of our Democratic colleagues disgracefully chose to boycott the President's Address. But their collective temper tantrum couldn't stop the rest of us from enjoying the President's speech.

I was honored to have as my guest the president of the National Border Patrol Council, Paul Perez, who has worked for 29 years in the U.S. Border Patrol and who has done a magnificent job leading that organization of incredible patriots, when Democrats have demonized law enforcement across the country, starting with defunding the police, abolishing ICE, and, of course, then the disrespectful way that President Biden's administration treated all of our professional law enforcement officers whose job it was to secure the border.

As we heard last night, President Trump has many achievements that we can all be very proud of, from securing the border from the massive surge of illegal immigration our country experienced during the Biden administration to reestablishing America's credibility on the world stage. But one of the accomplishments that I would like to highlight today is the improvement in our Nation's fiscal situation through the Working Families Tax Cut Act and the work of Office of Management and Budget Director Russ Vought.

Now, this may be the first speech on the Senate floor in a long time that has praised Russ Vought, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, but I think praise is due, as you will hear in a moment.

Through the Working Families Tax Cut Act, also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill, we were able to extend and make permanent many parts of President Trump's 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Unfortunately, no Democrat voted to protect the American people from a massive tax increase. It took exclusively Republican votes to do that. We prevented more than a \$4 million tax increase on the American people and saved my constituents in Texas an average of \$3,000.

Now, people want to talk about affordability. Allowing a \$3,000 tax increase to go into effect by effectively voting against this bill certainly does nothing to make affordability better. It makes it worse. But Republicans stepped forward where Democrats would not, in order to answer the call and respond to the needs of our constituents.

We helped working families by increasing the child tax credit to \$2,200, and indexing it to inflation, so people who have children and who have the additional expense associated with that will have some relief, have some money, to basically pay for their necessities of life.

And we strengthened the paid family and medical leave and employer-provided childcare credit. One of the things I hear the most from working moms is the difficulty of finding affordable childcare. We responded, by the paid family and medical leave and employer-provided childcare credits, by incentivizing employers to provide childcare to their employees, allowing working moms the peace of mind and the convenience of having childcare for their children.

And we delivered historic relief to hourly wage workers, as well, like folks who work in restaurants. I think most of us—I know I did when I first started out. I waited on tables at a Steak and Ale restaurant in San Antonio, TX. And I know from talking to a lot of young people who are just starting out, as I did at that point in my life, that they are welcoming the fact that now they don't have to pay taxes on income from tips up to \$25,000.

But it doesn't just affect people who wait on tables in restaurants. Hair stylists and anyone who receives tips as part of their compensation will benefit.

And then there is no tax on overtime. You know, many of our law enforcement personnel work more than 40 hours a week because, frankly, they don't get paid sufficiently by just working a 40-hour week. So many of them work overtime, and they are not alone. But by saying no tax on overtime, we not only provide American businesses the workforce that they need, but we also reward people who are willing to continue to work hard and provide for their families, to make sure they can keep more of their hard-earned money.

No tax on tips, no tax on overtime.

Of course, in addition to these, there are many other savings for the Amer-

ican people. President Trump made significant strides in getting our fiscal house in order by starting to rein in runaway government spending. Our national debt currently sits at about \$38 trillion, and I know that number boggles the mind. None of us can really adequately conceive of how much that is. But here is one indication: We spend more money on interest on the national debt than we do on defense, which is unsustainable in a dangerous world.

Thankfully, President Trump has made a commitment to request \$1.5 trillion for defense spending next year. But the truth is, unless we begin to deal with our runaway debt, that money is just going to be borrowed, and we need to do better. We need to do significantly better.

But the good news is we made a down payment in the Working Families Tax Cut Act, saving \$400 billion over 10 years.

You may think: Well, \$38 trillion, \$400 billion—that is just a drop in the ocean. But it is a start. We need to do more, and I trust that we will. We have to.

As many people know, our national debt is actually not a revenue problem. It is not how much—it is not that we don't collect enough taxes, as our friends on the Democratic side seem to think. They don't think there is any tax that shouldn't be raised. It is a spending problem.

I just came from a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee, where a new anti-fraud prosecutor has been nominated by President Trump. He testified that what we saw happen in the Somali daycare scandal is just the tip of the iceberg—make believe, non-governmental organizations providing nonexistent daycare services and bilking the American taxpayer of billions of dollars.

The Government Accountability Office has documented that there is between \$2 billion and \$500 billion of improper payments. That is money that should not be paid to the recipients of those funds.

And part of it is structural, it seems to me, because when the Federal Government appropriates money, much of that money is then contracted out to service providers or grantees or the like.

But one of the things we have to do is to make sure that there is accountability for those funds and that they are being spent for their intended purpose, not that they are being syphoned off by fraudsters and people that are taking advantage of the generosity of the American people.

But it is not just about the fraudsters and the generosity of the American people. It is about that this is money that could be used to address our debt and to make sure we can allocate the money that we do spend for proper purposes, like maintaining our national security.

Well, unfortunately, when it comes to spending, you know, the saying

goes: Somebody is spending like a drunken sailor—which shows a lot of disrespect to sailors. And, unfortunately, it is much, much worse than that. It is like the mindset of an alcoholic giving into the addiction, accepting the notion that our current situation is hopeless. So we might as well enjoy ourselves in the meantime. Well, that is a recipe for disaster.

Time and time again, we hear such tropes as this: Well, the real problem is mandatory spending. So why should we even try to cut discretionary spending?

Well, we need to look at all of it. We shouldn't shy away from any and all conversations when it comes to addressing our spending problem.

But the truth is, just like someone with an addiction to alcohol or gambling who wants to reform, you have got to start somewhere. And, last year, we made important reforms in our mandatory spending programs to make sure that, for example, illegal aliens don't receive free healthcare, and we strengthened work requirements for able-bodied adults who are receiving government benefits. It is not too much to ask that an able-bodied adult get off the couch, quit watching soap operas or playing video games, and contribute to their own support and the support of their family and their community and Nation. It is not too much to ask.

But I would argue that we need more than just trimming around the edges. We need a full change of mindset when it comes to our spending problem. That is where Russ Vought comes in.

Russ Vought is President Trump's Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, and he has helped create a paradigm shift that Washington has long needed in order to get our spending under control. Instead of throwing up his hands, as many in Washington have done before him, Mr. Vought and his team have put their noses to the grindstone to cut spending anywhere and everywhere possible.

Under his leadership, the Office of Management and Budget are on track to reduce the deficit by more than \$15 trillion over the next 10 years. That is real money. That is real money.

Let's take a look at some of the places where these savings are coming from. For starters, mandatory spending reforms in Medicaid, student loan forgiveness, and food stamps will add up to \$2 trillion in savings over the next 10 years. Revenue from President Trump's tariffs add up to another \$200 billion, which the Office of Management and Budget projects will raise \$4 trillion in debt over time.

In addition, deregulation—taking the handcuffs off of huge American jobs' engines—and tax reforms are expected to spur economic growth, which the Office of Management and Budget projects would account for an additional \$5.6 trillion in savings. OMB's projections include nearly \$2 trillion in savings from lower debt servicing payment. So not only is the debt the problem, but the interest you have to pay

on that debt just racks up more debt. But when you begin to cut, that debt service or those interest payments go down, which help address the issue.

This is where it gets pretty interesting. With such a high national debt, our debt servicing costs or the interest payments on the debt have eclipsed spending on national defense, as I said a moment ago. This is a very troubling sign when we spend more money on interest on the national debt than we do on defense. The good news is that in the same way that paying off a credit card can reduce your monthly interest payments through these spending reforms championed by Mr. Vought and the administration, they will decrease our interest expenses on our debt. And over 10 years, that can really add up.

I was recently with Secretary Bessent, the Secretary of the Treasury, and he shared that the government is projected to save between \$26 and \$30 billion due to a reduction in the Federal workforce.

Mr. Vought's determination has encouraged those of us here in Congress who are inclined toward fiscal responsibility to return to the regular-order appropriations process and pump the brakes on continuing resolutions and omnibus spending packages, which have been the norm for a long time. Fortunately, we refrained from passing an omnibus spending package this Congress. But we have also made progress through regular-order appropriations on lowering year-over-year spending. Fiscal year 2026 nondefense discretionary spending totalled \$18 billion less than 2025, and overall spending levels were about a billion dollars less. Of course, while a billion dollars may sound like pocket change compared to our national debt, again, it is heading in the right direction.

Considering the totality of what President Trump and his Office of Management and Budget have done, it is incredible to see that he has put the United States on track to erase, not just billions, but trillions in projected spending over the next 10 years. For too long, Washington has limited our imagination to think that our fiscal situation is hopeless. We have no choice.

President Trump and the excellent team he has put in place has changed all of that. All of us should be thankful for the excellent work that the President and OMB Director Vought and his team have done to meaningfully shift our fiscal situation in the right direction, save taxpayer money, and protect our Nation.

Of course, this work on taxes and spending represents just one small piece of the President's impressive record, as we were reminded last night. President Trump is helping to make America great again and his State of the Union was a powerful reflection on how far we have come this last year and what the future might look like—the bright future might look like—ahead of it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. RICKETTS. I ask unanimous consent the following Senators be permitted to speak prior to the scheduled rollcall vote: Senator CANTWELL for up to 10 minutes, Senator RICKETTS for up to 5 minutes, Senator MORENO for up to 15 minutes.

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

Mr. RICKETTS. Since Senator CANTWELL is not here, I will go ahead and get my program rolling.

HOME OWNERSHIP

Mr. President, Nebraska is the best place in the world to live. Nebraska is what America is supposed to be. Sadly, in Nebraska, the dream that most Americans have of home ownership is also becoming more difficult, just as it is in the rest of the country. First-time home ownership in this country is difficult because housing is expensive, hard to get. In fact, the average age of a first-time homeowner in America today is 40. Ten years ago, that was 31.

It is redtape that is helping to drive up the cost of homes—redtape and regulation. In fact, it is estimated that 25 percent of the cost of a new home is actually regulation. If you are talking about an apartment building, that is actually 40 percent of the cost of an apartment build is regulation. This is not a new problem; it has been around for a while.

When I was Governor, we faced the same issues, especially in rural Nebraska. When I was Governor, I worked with my legislature, and we passed our Rural Workforce Housing Act, and we dedicated \$7 million, and we created this fund that communities and developers could apply to. What many communities did is they got this grant money, they created essentially a revolving fund to be able to loan out to developers to allow them to either get bridge funding or cover some of the costs. And, ultimately, those developers and communities would repay that fund back to the communities who could then loan it back out again. This was very successful. It allowed us to be able to encourage developers to move outside of Lincoln and Omaha and build housing in our smaller towns and rural communities. In fact, it was so successful, we went back and added another \$10 million to that.

It is these kind of Nebraska solutions that I am bringing to Washington, DC, for the rest of America. How can we create more housing supply to address the issue to bring the cost of housing down? That is what we need to attack here in Washington, DC. In fact, that is what we are doing in the Banking Committee, with the leadership of Chairman SCOTT, we have put forth the Renewing Opportunity in the American Dream Act or ROAD to Housing Act.

This bill came out of our Banking Committee unanimously because both Republicans and Democrats understand the need to create more housing supply

to address the issue of home ownership in America. The House has a similar bill that came out of their committee nearly unanimously. And now I expect that within the next few weeks, we will be voting on the ROAD to Housing Act here on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

In this bill, the ROAD to Housing Act, I have a piece that I introduced called Streamlining Rural Housing Act, and this is because many rural communities draw upon both housing and urban development money, as well as U.S. Agriculture Department money to be able to create more housing supply. However, both HUD and USDA have conflicting or overlapping regulations that create confusion and adds redtape.

What my part of the ROAD to Housing Act would do would help streamline so that we are not doing things in series. We are doing them in parallel, that we are actually trying to consolidate the review and inspection process, all those sorts of things that would help us get that money out faster, which would create housing supply fastest, which would help bring down the cost of housing.

I also cosponsored the Housing Supply Frameworks Act. This is a bill that was led by one of my colleagues in my delegation, Congressman MIKE FLOOD. It really helps create a framework for best practices for zoning, to be able to help communities look to see what they can do with regard to their zoning practices to be able to encourage building housing that will create more supply, which will bring the costs down.

The ROAD to Housing Act is an important step. It is how we are fighting for Americans to be able to create the opportunities for home ownership, to fight to allow those families to achieve the American dream, to be able to own their own home, which is so important to so many Americans. It is often their first big investment. It is how they create wealth. It truly is one of the things that makes this country great.

If we can pass the ROAD to Housing Act, we will be able to help cut the redtape that exists there. We will be able to unlock billions of dollars in private capital. This will help us create more supply and bring the cost down. This bill is great for American families, for our veterans, and for helping people achieve the American dream. It is especially great for our rural communities.

As Governor of Nebraska, we worked very hard to be able to create more housing supply. I am so pleased to be able to be here in the U.S. Senate to be able to continue to fight to make that dream of affordable home ownership, again, something that Americans can aspire to in this country.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support the ROAD to Housing Act so we can pass this important piece of legislation to be able to help make housing more affordable for Americans and help restore that dream of home ownership to Nebraskans and Americans all across this country.