

should share. It aims to make taxes for families lower, simpler, and fairer. According to the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation and recent news reports, the “Middle Class [are the] biggest winners in [the] Senate tax plan.”

It also aims to make it easier for small businesses to grow, invest, and hire. For Kentucky’s small businesses and for those across the country, this proposal will help to do just that by creating incentives to bring investment and jobs home and keep them here.

The plan before the Finance Committee fulfills our main goal for tax reform, which is taking more money out of Washington’s pockets and putting more money into the pockets of the middle class.

Last evening, the committee released a modified chairman’s mark that, among other important elements, will effectively repeal ObamaCare’s individual mandate tax so we can provide even more tax relief to low- and middle-income families. In short, the goal is to repeal an unpopular tax from an unworkable law in order to provide more tax relief to middle-class families.

Now, as the committee continues its legislative markup through an open process, it will explore further ways to improve this good legislation. Both Republicans and Democrats have offered hundreds of amendments. Chairman HATCH is setting aside full days for the committee to consider them. Once the Finance Committee completes its work and reports its proposal to the Senate floor, all Members will have the chance to offer their amendments under the regular order.

Another Senate committee is having an important markup today as well. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee is beginning its consideration of an important proposal to support good jobs, our energy future, and our national security.

So, once again, I commend Chairman MURKOWSKI and the members of the committee for their work on this proposal to further develop Alaska’s oil and natural gas potential in an environmentally responsible way—more American jobs, more American energy, and more energy security and independence. I look forward to the Energy Committee reporting its legislation today.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate continued its efforts to confirm the President’s talented nominees to staff the Federal Government.

We advanced the nomination of David Zatezalo to serve as the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health, an important position to the thousands of miners in States like Kentucky. I look forward to confirming his nomination early this afternoon, along with that of Mark Esper, who

will be confirmed to another important position, Secretary of the Army.

Also, we will turn to Joseph Otting, President Trump’s nominee to serve as Comptroller of the Currency. This position is crucial to protecting our national banking system, and Mr. Otting has the experience necessary to excel there.

Then, the Senate will continue our efforts to ensure that our Nation’s judiciary fulfills its proper role in our democracy by confirming two more talented nominees to serve as Federal district court judges. President Trump has continued to nominate individuals who will interpret the law as it is actually written, not as they wish it were.

Donald Coggins has been nominated to serve as district court judge for the District of South Carolina. He has been in private practice in South Carolina for over three decades. The Senate Judiciary Committee reported his nomination by a voice vote. He is a talented nominee, and I look forward to confirming him soon.

Then the Senate will consider the nomination of Dabney Friedrich to serve as district court judge for the District of Columbia. Ms. Friedrich has a wealth of experience, having been in private practice and having served as assistant U.S. attorney in both the Eastern District of Virginia and the Southern District of California, and she has been confirmed twice by the Senate as a Commissioner of the U.S. Sentencing Commission. The Judiciary Committee also reported her nomination by a voice vote. These nominees will respect the rule of law on the Federal bench, and they should be confirmed without delay.

I would like to again thank Chairman GRASSLEY for his commitment to bringing the President’s impressive judicial nominees to the floor. These are both respected nominees who have the support of Members on both sides of the aisle, and I hope we can consider their nominations without any partisan procedural hurdles. We should confirm them soon.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Zatezalo nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of David G. Zatezalo, of West Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

Mr. THUNE. Thank you, Mr. President.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, on Sunday, Politico offered this headline: “Middle class biggest winners in Senate tax plan, study says.”

The article goes on to say: “Moderate-income people would consistently see the largest percentage declines in their tax bills, according to an analysis released late Saturday by the official, nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation.”

It goes on to say: “In 2019, people in the middle spectrum, earning between \$50,000 and \$70,000, would see their taxes fall by 7.1 percent. Those earning between \$20,000 and \$30,000 would see a 10.4 percent decline.”

This is what we set out to achieve with the Senate tax bill that we released last week—real relief for American families, and that is what our bill delivers.

I don’t need to tell anyone that the American people have had a rough few years. Stagnant wages and a lack of opportunities have left many American families stretched thin. A recent survey found that 50 percent—50 percent—of people out there consider themselves to be living paycheck to paycheck. About one-third of those same people say that they are literally just \$400 away from a financial crisis. Well, real help is on the way.

Last night, Chairman HATCH released a revised bill that provides even more relief for middle-class families. I applaud Chairman HATCH for his work on this revised bill that includes Republican and Democratic amendments and reflects feedback we have received from the whole Republican conference.

Our bill provides immediate, direct relief to hard-working Americans. Our bill doubles the standard deduction. That means, beginning in January, a family making \$24,000 a year or less per year will not be paying any taxes, and families making more than \$24,000 per year will be paying significantly less than what they are paying today.

Our bill also doubles the child tax credit from \$1,000 to \$2,000 per child. We all know that raising children is expensive, and this provision provides a significant tax cut for families across the country.