

are told. We have been told that before, of course. The cycle repeats: Republican promises that tax cuts will pay for themselves, followed by massive deficits, 189 percent increase in the deficit under Ronald Reagan, followed by Republicans insisting that we respond with austere cuts to investments in our people and in our opportunity. So easily they forget.

But middle class Americans will not forget who is responsible when their taxes go up, when their tax increases pay for tax cuts for the top 1 percent, and when, in the years ahead, more and more investments need to be cut to pay the interest on the debt under which this plan will bury the children and grandchildren of America.

And all because my colleagues across the aisle wanted to skip out on doing what they knew would be hard, just as they did when former Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp introduced his comprehensive tax reform that was responsibly paid for. That is Dave Camp, Republican, State of Michigan. He is retired now, but he offered a responsible bill, and it was not even considered by his committee.

He asked his colleagues to do something hard, of course, but they dismissed it, dismissed it out of hand, because it would have required hashing out a difficult compromise. But easy is no synonym for successful.

President Kennedy told us that we choose these things, that is, tackling our greatest challenges, "not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

So I ask my Republican friends—no, I urge them, set aside this dangerous, reckless, and irresponsible bill. Instead, let's choose the hard path that involves hard choices and trust and all of those things that made tax reform successful in 1986, which are the missing elements in this flawed bill.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats are ready to sit down with you and work on this challenge, together. It won't be easy, that is a promise, but if we do it together, if we do it in a way that doesn't balloon the debt or raise taxes on the middle class, we have a chance to do it right. Let's take that chance.

RECOGNIZING RURAL HEALTH WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this week is Rural Health Week in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It is a time to promote awareness of the full range of issues that impact rural health throughout the State and the health status of rural Pennsylvanians.

Nationally, Pennsylvania ranks as one of the States with the highest number of rural residents, with 23 percent of Pennsylvanians residing in rural areas.

Rural communities also face unique healthcare concerns, a lack of providers, accessibility issues, particularly in terms of transportation and technology, and affordability issues as a result of larger percentages of uninsured and underinsured citizens and greater out-of-pocket health costs.

Mr. Speaker, before I was elected to serve in the House of Representatives, I spent nearly 30 years in the nonprofit healthcare field, assisting those with life-changing diseases and disabilities. I am acutely aware of the challenges many face when it comes to obtaining reasonably priced healthcare. It is especially critical for rural America, like much of the Fifth Congressional District of Pennsylvania.

We are facing a healthcare crisis in our Nation's rural areas. These often disadvantaged populations are still struggling to access affordable, quality care. Many remain uninsured. Most are underinsured; however, access to quality care remains the largest challenge.

Even when people gain access to health insurance, it doesn't equal access to care. Rural hospitals across the country are closing, leaving patients without access to their emergency rooms and long-term healthcare facilities.

Eighty rural hospitals in the United States have closed since 2010. One in three rural hospitals are financially vulnerable. At the current closure rate, more than 25 percent of rural hospitals will close in less than a decade.

In addition to hospital closures, a workforce shortage plagues rural America. Seventy-seven percent of more than 2,000 rural counties in the United States are designated as having a shortage of healthcare professionals. Recruitment and retention of experienced professionals, including primary care physicians, is an ongoing challenge.

Furthermore, the opioid crisis that is sweeping the Nation has ravaged our rural communities, leaving even more of the population in need of crucial health services. Adolescents and young adults living in rural areas are more vulnerable to opioid abuse than their urban counterparts.

The prevalence of fatal drug overdoses has skyrocketed in rural areas. High unemployment and a greater rate of the types of injuries that result in prescriptions for opioid medications have contributed to this. But there are ways to increase treatment options.

Just last week, the House approved a bill that I introduced that would expand healthcare access for our veterans through telemedicine. The bill allows VA-credentialed healthcare providers to practice telemedicine across State lines.

Mr. Speaker, our veterans should receive the best care possible, no matter where they are located. With advances in technology, we see new opportunities for veterans to obtain coverage through telemedicine, especially in some of our most rural areas.

As we celebrate National Rural Health Day this Thursday, it is my hope that we continue to strive for a 21st century healthcare system that works for everyone in America. With technology today, we have the opportunity to expand services, regardless of where one resides, particularly for those in rural regions where the need is great and the services are scarce.

PRESIDENT TRUMP'S AMERICA FIRST DOCTRINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, last week, the President visited Asia for the first time as Commander in Chief, and took the opportunity, while on foreign soil, to reiterate his America First doctrine.

I rise today because an America First doctrine mentality will not lead to success for the United States or the world. This way of thinking is an outdated, obsolete, and dangerous form of isolationism. It will not keep us safe. It will not make us stronger economically.

Ironically, this phrase paints a picture that is blatantly un-American. America First sends a signal to the global community that the United States no longer wants to carry the torch of freedom and democracy which shines brighter through inclusion and collaboration.

On the national security front, the United States has the strongest military the world has known. For decades, allies have counted on the U.S. to step up to the plate to work with them to protect the shared values we hold dear.

As we face numerous international challenges, both old and new, we need to put more faith and investment into our international and diplomatic institutions, not weaken them. The United States did not earn its reputation as leader of the free world by standing back and allowing darker forces to prevail.

As oppressive regimes like Russia seek to undermine democracies, including our own, America's commitment to democracy must be stronger than ever.

The President's threats to NATO and the U.N. have caused our trusted allies to question our commitment to collective defense. We know that when countries work in concert, the chance of conflict decreases.

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Despite its challenges, globalization has led to one of the most peaceful and productive times in world history. Adopting protectionist policies would stifle this progress, and certainly won't put America first.

Our efforts to address difficult domestic and international challenges are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they can and should happen simultaneously. We defeated communism, in part, by showing the world that a commitment to democracy and expanding

economic opportunity makes peoples' lives better and nations more secure. Meeting our commitments overseas also makes us stronger and safer here at home.

Standing up against the isolationist tide sweeping the globe is critical to preserving our leadership role. Take the President's decision to pull out from the Paris climate agreement as another example. By abandoning our partnership with every other country in the world, the President has put our credibility and our Earth at risk. We are now the only nation not participating in this historic climate pact.

To reassert our integrity for global leadership, we must lead by example. This includes recalling lessons learned from earlier periods of isolationism. Relinquishing ground in this area creates a vacuum which less friendly, less democratic actors are prepared and capable to fill.

Abdicating global leadership, praising authoritarian regimes, and belittling allies has been a hallmark of this Presidency. This does not put America or our interests first. Our U.N. and NATO partnership should not just be honored and preserved, but strengthened. We are serious about taking on terrorism, cybersecurity treats, and other dangers that jeopardize the peace of our planet. Instead of distinguishing between winners and losers and sowing division where it need not exist, we must acknowledge our shared goals and values with our allies around the world, because our commitment to democracy and diplomacy is what has always made our Nation great.

THE CIVIL AIR PATROL'S PACE OF OPERATIONS IS EXTRAORDINARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the exceptional emergency and operational contributions of the Civil Air Patrol and its 58,000 volunteers. In the near future, I hope to also talk about two other primary missions of the CAP: youth development and aerospace/STEM education.

Literally every day, the CAP responds to life-threatening emergencies, homeland security requests, and a wide range of missions for States and the Federal Government with over 500 single-engine aircraft in every State and in Puerto Rico. As an active member since 2004, I have had the privilege of flying many of these missions, so I speak from personal experience.

Over the past 15 months, the CAP has responded to four hurricanes, major wildfires in the West, dozens of other emergencies, including search and rescues, in addition to vital military missions on a daily basis. The high operational tempo has helped ensure that the CAP, for a second year in a row, has flown over 100,000 hours.

The CAP's pace of operations is extraordinary when one considers that these missions are flown by volunteer professionals who pay dues to belong to the CAP, and they must take time from their work or use their vacation times to actually fly these missions.

Vital for communities and for every State are the CAP's disaster relief operations. The mission is best highlighted by the CAP's massive volunteer response to the three recent rapid-fire hurricanes—Harvey, Irma, and Maria—that made U.S. landfall from Texas to the Virgin Islands.

While additional flight hours are still expected, 2,800 hours have already been flown and nearly half a million photographs have been taken for FEMA, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These photos are being used to assess damage and to focus on recovery efforts.

To do this, the CAP has used 118 aircraft and over 1,000 personnel from 44 wings—there is a wing for every State and Puerto Rico and D.C.—and region headquarters across the Nation. For large-scale operations, such as long-term hurricane support, the CAP often depends on the assistance of these adjacent wings in different States and different regions of the country.

I was able to view up close and personal hurricane recovery operations when I flew several sorties during Hurricane Harvey. On one mission, I was responsible for taking full-motion video of three dams along the Texas-Louisiana border to help establish that they were in good condition and safe for those living in surrounding areas. Those assessments could mean the difference between life and death for many communities.

In California, where fast-moving wildfires destroyed over 8,900 homes, the CAP continues to fly photographic missions in support of FEMA and California. Hundreds of sorties have been flown and 13,586 photos taken. These photos are being used to help emergency managers analyze the damage and assess the assistance needed by those whose homes and businesses have been damaged or destroyed.

In addition to conventional photography, the CAP's California operations have included testing a new leading-edge tactical aerial imagery system, which helped eliminate distortion in photos, making it easier for FEMA to analyze the data and making them a more effective tool for damage assessments. The CAP is pleased to be part of this test program, and it is expected to help improve wildfire damage assessments.

Operational missions for the Air Force and other government agencies occur daily and without fanfare. These include, among others, being a target for Air Force interceptors, helping to train combat ground forces, and escorting military remotely piloted aircraft for training. Air Combat Command's First Air Force provides operational

coordination for these CAP missions, which comprise about 80 percent of the First Air Force weekly operational flying.

I was privileged recently to fly with the CAP Congressional Squadron on a Fertile Keynote mission. This mission is unusual, as it provides CAP aircraft as a slow-moving target for its Air Force pilots to practice interception techniques. The Congressional Squadron is unique, as it includes Members of Congress and congressional staff who fly with CAP airmen.

Our mission that day was to simulate a general aviation aircraft that was in controlled airspace without permission. Two F-16 Vipers scrambled from Joint Base Andrews to find and definitely intercept us. These missions provide excellent training at a fraction of the cost to the government, and they are very valuable in training our great men and women who wear Air Force uniforms.

Another key mission is to help train ground combat soldiers who are about to deploy overseas. Two CAP squadrons are tasked with providing this support.

Mr. Speaker, I will certainly continue this discussion later.

THE REPUBLICAN TAX PLAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, it usually takes time to uncover a tax scam, but this graph tells the whole story of the Republican tax bill in a glance.

If the House bill passes, in 2018, taxes will probably go down, taxes for individuals; and that is the blue line. Income taxes will probably go down. So far so good.

But follow the blue line for average U.S. taxpayers after 2019 and you will see income taxes from 2020 to 2027, the end of the time frame for this bill, go up. In fact, from 2019 to 2027, we see tax increases for average taxpayers. There is the blue line, and we see these increases take off steeply for average taxpayers.

Now follow the red line for business income taxes. Business income taxes, like individual taxes, start off by going down, too. That means tax cuts. There they go. By 2020, business taxes, like individual income taxes, are still mostly level or going down.

Then at 2020, business income taxes increase—the same with individual income taxes. Both go up.

Then comes 2024. This is the divide line; the great divide between business income taxes and individual income taxes. Business income taxes turn abruptly down—there they go; there is the red line—while individual income taxes, just as abruptly, turn steeply up. There is the blue line. Individual tax increases.

The graph showing individual income taxes going up is this blue line, but it represents what is happening in blue States and red States alike.