

in to the pressure to put the restaurant in a more acceptable part of town, but like most people in South St. Pete, the Brayboys are a different cut because they are not easily deterred. If there is one thing my colleagues should know about the people of South St. Pete, it is this: Don't test their resolve, because you are in for a surprise.

Undeterred, Mr. and Mrs. Brayboys took money out of their 401(k) accounts and poured all of their life savings into buying that hulk of a building on 22nd Street. After gutting the inside and pouring in their blood, sweat, and tears into remodeling the property, Chief's Creole Cafe opened in November of 2014 and has been going strong ever since, creating jobs and changing the way people think about South St. Pete. This is a picture of how the restaurant looks today.

Despite the warnings of all of those doubtful lenders, they have been able to sustain the business by attracting both locals and customers from outside of the area of South St. Pete. Does that not look like something that is a well-run, growing, successful business?

So the old saying stands: If you build it, and if you really try, they will come.

Now, this is a great story of stubborn determination triumphing over fear and adversity and rejection after rejection, but this type of story is few and far between in too many parts of Florida and across the country.

So let me show you another picture. This is the Three Oaks Plaza. The Three Oaks Plaza used to be the location of a Dollar Tree store, but the store closed last year. This is how it used to look, and this is how it looks now. The closing of the Dollar Tree store came on the heels of the closing of the local Walmart nearby.

Unfortunately, this is all too common in South St. Pete and too many other parts of Florida. The problem isn't new, but we need a new way to think about it. We need economic policies that rely less on outside investors and outside companies to come in and remake the image of the area and rely more, instead, on empowering local residents to create their own businesses. They are more likely to keep profits in the community, creating a more sustainable loop of economic activity.

That is what I want to recommend that this Senate and future Senates do with legislation. Consider the example of legislation that I introduced earlier this year called the Economic Modernization Act. That bill does a lot of things, but one key thing it does is to create a new tax break for local businesses that move into buildings that have long sat idle and vacant. Under a piece of legislation such as that, if a business moves into a building that has been vacant for 2 or more years and renovates the property, the business would be able to get a tax deduction worth many more times than what it put into it. Any profits earned at the

property, for the first 3 years in that building, would be a tax deduction. The deduction would be capped. It could be, in legislation, at 50 percent of the business's wages to make sure that the employees are also getting a benefit, and the more the business pays its employees, the more the business saves with that tax deduction and, therefore, saves in taxes.

Simply put, the bill, or legislation like it, will make it easier for local entrepreneurs to rebuild their community, helping to turn more places like this first photo into places like Chief's Creole Cafe.

Now, that is what we ought to be doing, not digging out old policies from the 1980s and calling it something new like our colleagues here in the Congress did last year with the tax bill. The tax bill added trillions to the national debt and made it easier for big corporations to game the tax system and put Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, our infrastructure, and all other sorts of priorities at risk because the entire national debt is run up \$2 trillion over a 10-year period.

Where is the money to do all of these other priorities—Medicaid, Medicare, infrastructure, Social Security?

When big corporations see places like South St. Pete, they don't necessarily see the financial opportunity that Mr. and Mrs. Brayboy saw and turn it into a going concern. They don't necessarily want to empower places. Sometimes it just goes over their heads, and they miss the opportunity.

We need to incentivize local people to revitalize a community and, in the process, to be economically successful. We need to create more stories like the successful story of the Brayboys. We need to make it easier for locals to take old, abandoned buildings and turn them into new, thriving businesses that value their people and employ local residents. We need to encourage local communities, which understand their own needs, to be financially successful and have an opportunity to do that.

Despite what others say, instead of a tax bill that raises the national debt by \$2 trillion, wouldn't you believe that if we could do this all over America, it would help so much of the economic underpinnings of our country?

Let's think of a way that it should be, and this is one way. We need to do more to lift up those at the bottom and help them help themselves. I hope our colleagues will agree, and I hope our colleagues will consider legislation like this in the future.

I yield the floor.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. In my capacity as the Senator from Louisiana, the Senate stands in recess until 7:20 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:07 p.m., recessed until 7:20 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. KENNEDY).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will come to order, please.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### S.J. RES. 54

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I hope the Saudi royal family was paying attention to yesterday's debate in the U.S. Senate. The bipartisan vote on S.J. Res. 54, of which I am a cosponsor, was significant for multiple reasons, but most of all for what it says about the potency of the outrage and disgust in this country and in the Congress about the conduct of Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi Crown Prince.

That outrage has been building over time, as the number of civilian casualties since Saudi Arabia's intervention and ongoing aerial bombardment of Yemen—one of the world's poorest countries—has swollen into the thousands. We have all seen the photographs of the dead and dying and of children who are just skin and bones. It is said that 85,000 children already have starved to death. The UN warns that 13 million Yemeni civilians could starve to death by the end of this year, if the war does not end.

Of course, the Houthis and their Iranian benefactors share much of the blame for the death and destruction in Yemen, but we are not supporting them. Rather, until recently, we were providing aerial refueling for Saudi warplanes, and we continue to provide the Saudis with intelligence and targeting assistance.

As if the kidnapping of Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri, the blockade of Qatar, the imprisonment of women's rights activists, and the carnage in Yemen were not enough, the outrage toward the Crown Prince finally boiled over with the horrific, premeditated murder of Jamal Khashoggi, a respected journalist, Saudi citizen, and American resident, who had criticized the royal family.

Mr. Khashoggi's murder and dismemberment by Saudi Government agents at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul triggered an international outcry, and it exposed the depth of depravity of the Saudi royal family. That an ally of the United States would so brazenly commit such a crime and then so blatantly attempt to cover it up, speaks volumes.

After a string of lies by the Saudi authorities, it is only due to the Turkish