

# **Family Research Council**

## **13<sup>th</sup> Annual Values Voter Summit**

### **Remarks by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell**

**Speaker:**

**Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)**

**Location: Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C.**

**Time: 10:07 a.m. EDT**

**Date: Friday, September 21, 2018**

(Cheers, applause.)

SENATOR MITCH MCCONNELL (R-KY): Thank you. Well, good morning, everyone.

AUDIENCE: Good morning!

SEN. MCCONNELL: I'm really happy to be here this morning and to see all of you. Tony was very gracious in his introduction. You are extraordinarily well-led. Tony Perkins is an outstanding leader, is he not? (Cheers, applause.)

I really consider it an honor to be here this morning, but really it's an honor to stand with you, together, as we fight for the change our country needs. For almost a decade, that meant standing together on the defensive side of the ball. You and I spent eight long years facing a president that was diametrically opposed to the common sense conservative principles that have made our country great.

President Obama and his allies thought Washington bureaucrats know how to run an economy better than American workers and American small business owners. They thought the federal government would spend your hard-earned money better than you would spend it yourself. They thought it was quaint and old-fashioned for judges to interpret our laws and the Constitution as they were actually written, and tried to appoint judges who would give their own personal ideology and feelings the force of law. They tried to define down our timeless right to religious freedom until it would mean little more than the right to go to church on Sunday, but don't say anything about it the rest of the week. In essence, the far left did everything they could to prove that millions and millions of Americans simply did not matter to them. They bragged about a so-called economic recovery that brought more wealth and more jobs to our nation's big blue metropolitan areas, but practically everywhere else left middle-class families way behind. They dabbled in socialized medicine and let the consequences – skyrocketing premiums, limited access to quality care – fall right on the backs of American families.

This is the modern Democratic Party. This is who they are. President Obama said during his first campaign that working-class Americans – you remember this one – get bitter and cling to their guns or religion. Just a few months ago, Secretary Clinton said I won the places that are optimistic, diverse, dynamic, moving forward. That's how she described her voters. I won't repeat what she said about all the places where she lost. (Laughter.)

But, my friends, this is who they are and this is what they think about you and your families and your communities and your values. Well, look, by November 2016 the American people had seen enough. They elected a Republican House, Republican Senate, and President Donald Trump to fight for them and their families.

And let me add just a note here about this. You may not know this, but you can go back a hundred years and Republicans have only had the Senate, the House, and the White House for

20 of those hundred years. So we were determined not to squander this opportunity because they don't come along all that often.

So it's been 20 months; time to take stock, draw up a progress report. As soon as we got to Washington, this Republican government started looking for every opportunity to cut taxes for the American people and slash through the jungle of red tape that was holding back job growth. In the Senate, we've confirmed President Trump's key appointments and we're getting the federal government back in line.

We also have a special tool where Congress can directly repeal an administrative rule put out by the executive branch. Prior to last January, it had only been used once successfully in the history of the country. Well, we've used it 16 times and counting to throw out some of the terrible Obama administration rules like regulations that interfered in our schools and forced states to fund Planned Parenthood. We got rid of them – got rid of them. (Cheers, applause.)

And, of course, you're all aware we passed the most significant overhaul of the tax code in 30 years – tax cuts for middle-class families, tax cuts for job creators, better incentives for companies to bring their money back home, invest, and create jobs right here in the United States. (Cheers, applause.)

You may remember this one. One leading Democrat said those policies would bring about Armageddon – (laughter) – Armageddon. Republicans said they'd create more prosperity for American families. So it's time to ask, who was right? Who was right?

We've already seen faster year-over-year wage growth for American workers than we've had since 2009. For the first time in recorded history, the Labor Department reports there are more job openings in America than there are people looking for work. That's never happened before. (Applause.) And claims for jobless benefits recently hit the lowest level since – get this – 1969. (Applause.)

So, my friends, this time the new prosperity is not just being captured by big coastal cities and a select few industries. Manufacturing jobs are growing again. Mining and logging jobs are growing again. Small communities and rural areas have – listen to this – actually outpaced the big cities in rates of job growth. (Applause.)

So, look, you and I know that government doesn't create prosperity. Only workers and entrepreneurs can do that. But when we get Washington out of the American people's way, good things tend to happen. And we're proud that our policies are playing a part in this incredible economic moment so more working Americans and their families can get ahead.

What else have we accomplished? After years of belt-tightening that forced our all-volunteer armed forces to do more with less, we've also taken action to rebuild our military. (Cheers, applause.) We authored the largest year-on-year increase in defense funding in 15 years and the largest pay raise for our troops in nearly a decade. (Cheers, applause.)

We've also confronted the drug abuse epidemic that is eating away at so many of our communities. The Senate has passed landmark legislation to fight back against the opioid crisis and get the critical resources in the hands of first responders, survivors, and families.

We repealed the individual mandate tax at the heart of Obamacare. (Cheers, applause.) We threw away the board of bureaucrats that was set up to ration your healthcare. (Cheers, applause.)

So, look, I could go on all day there's so much to talk about. But my colleagues and I are so aware that these are not just our accomplishments, they are yours. You were called names because of your values. You were mocked for the way you voted. But today, with our economy booming, our military rebuilding, and hope coming back into communities that were left behind, it's your ideas and your values that are turning this country around. (Applause.)

Now, you know, I'm often asked what's it like to be the majority leader of the Senate. I mean, I've struggled with coming up with the perfect answer. I've decided it's actually a little bit like being the groundskeeper at a cemetery – (laughter) – everybody's under you, but nobody's listening. (Laughter, applause.)

So what does the majority leader get to do that the other 99 don't? We have a very tiny majority of 51-49, but the majority leader gets to decide what we're going to do. And as Tony indicated in his very kind introduction, the most consequential decision I've made in my entire career is the decision not to do something, and that was to not fill the vacancy created by the death of Justice Scalia – (extended cheers and applause) – in the middle of the presidential election. Let the American people decide who they want to make this lifetime appointment. Well, it turns out that one of the most consequential decisions I ever made led to the appointment of Neil Gorsuch. (Cheers, applause.)

And it's not just the Supreme Court, my friends. If you're familiar with the federal system, there are the district courts, the circuit courts, and the Supreme Court. A very, very small number of cases make it to the Supreme Court. The circuit courts are where most complex litigation ends.

The president has nominated and we've confirmed 26 circuit court judges. This is the fastest pace in the history of our country. (Cheers, applause.) And there will be more before the end of the year. (Cheers, applause.) These are lifetime appointments. If you want to have a longtime impact on what kind of country we're going to have for the next generation, the single most consequential thing we can do is these lifetime appointments of men and women to the court who believe that the job of a judge is to follow the law. (Applause.) Shouldn't be controversial. Justice Scalia said you're not a very good judge if you're not occasionally unhappy with the outcome you reach because it's not your personal opinion, it's what's dictated by the Constitution or the law. Justice Gorsuch put it this way. He said judges don't wear red robes or blue robes; they wear black robes.

So these are the kind of men and women that President Trump has been sending up and we've been confirming, and I hope it makes you proud. And if we can hold onto the Senate

majority for two more years, we're going to transform the federal judiciary with men and women who believe in this vision of America. (Cheers, applause.)

And you're all following the current Supreme Court fight, and you will watch it unfold in the course of the next week. President Trump has nominated a stunningly successful individual. (Cheers, applause.) You've watched the fight. You've watched the tactics. But here's what I want to tell you: In the very near future, Judge Kavanaugh will be on the United States Supreme Court. (Extended cheers and applause.) So, my friends, keep the faith. Don't get rattled by all of this. We're going to plow right through it and do our job. (Cheers, applause.)

So, moving beyond the Supreme Court, here's our challenge for the future: to do our jobs, wait out the obstruction, confirm more quality nominees to the judiciary. We're going to keep on doing it. We're not going to get rattled by all this, and I don't want you to get rattled by it. We're not going to slow down. We're just going to keep going ahead. Even more nominees will be confirmed. There will be pro-family, pro-opportunity policies needed to be put in place for the American people by the Senate.

We've come a long way together. There's much left to be done – to be done, but don't let anybody tell you for a minute this hasn't been a productive year and a half. I'm now in my 34<sup>th</sup> year in the Senate – hard to believe. (Laughter.) This has been – if you want America to be a right-of-center nation, this last year and a half has been the best year and a half in my time in the Senate. (Cheers, applause.) And the reason you should know that, look how angry the left is, huh? (Laughter.) Look at it. The angrier they get, the better we're doing. (Laughter, cheers, applause.)

You may have heard that they try to make everything on the nominations front go very, very slowly. So I'll tell you a story. You can – the last six presidents, add them all up, the majority leader – whoever that was and whatever party it was – only had to file cloture – that is the process to try to move a nomination along when things are being slowed down – only had to file cloture 24 times in the first two years, all six of them together. As of a month ago, I'd had to do it 110 times in a year and a half. (Cheers, applause.) It doesn't mean they can ultimately win. It's sort of mindless obstruction for no point, because ultimately you don't succeed; you lose.

So I've discovered that there's at least one other tool that the majority leader has. You remember when you had kids in school? There's nothing they liked better than recess. (Laughter, applause.) Well, you know, the Senate's not all that different. (Laughter.) So some of you who follow this stuff closely may have noticed that I canceled the August recess. (Cheers, applause.)

But, being a benevolent sort, I had some members who had younger children. They said could we just have the first week of August off so we could take the kids to Disney World or wherever? I said, OK, that's reasonable. And, sure enough, they asked for a couple more days after that. I said that'll cost you six district judges. (Cheers, applause.) Boom – six district judges. (Cheers, applause.)

And then – and then, the last week of August, the week that included Labor Day, they said can we please have the whole week off? I said, well, that'll cost you 15 district judges. (Laughter.) And it's amazing how cooperative everybody got. (Laughter.)

So we're going to wrap up here at the end of the month a lot of our business. We're going to fund the government. We're going to have Judge Kavanaugh – Justice Kavanaugh. (Cheers, applause.) And then our friends on the other side, who have a number of incumbents running for reelection this year, are going to want to what? Recess? (Laughter.) So – (laughter) – it won't surprise you that I'm making my list and checking it twice. (Laughter, applause.)

And that, my friend, is how we're dealing with obstruction and how we're going to keep on doing the president's appointments, not only to the courts but to boards and commissions and to the government.

Thank you for all you're doing. Keep the faith. We're changing America more than a lot of people recognize, but I'm glad you do. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today. Thanks so much. (Cheers, applause.)

(END)