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## CNN NEWSROOM

**Moore Back on Campaign Trail; Retired Marine Launches Write-in Campaign; Ivanka in India; Trump Calls Warren "Pocahontas"; Senate Tax Bill. Aired 9:30-10a ET**

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[09:34:08] JOHN BERMAN, CNN ANCHOR: All right, two weeks out from Alabama's Senate election, and Roy Moore taking off the gloves, back on the campaign trail, fighting the growing accusations of sex abuse that include an accusation that he molested a 14-year-old girl.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ROY MOORE (R), ALABAMA SENATE CANDIDATE: The truth is, this is not really odd at all. This is simply dirty politics. And it's a sign of the immorality -- it's a sign of the immorality of our time. Politicians will stop at nothing to win an election.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BERMAN: Remember, again, he is the one accused of molesting a 14-year-old girl.

Kaitlan Collins in Alabama with the very latest.

Kaitlan.

KAITLAN COLLINS, CNN WHITE HOUSE REPORTER: Yes, John, quite a warm reception for Roy Moore in Henagar, Alabama, last night. Now, this was one of his first public appearances back on the campaign trail in about 11 days or so. And one of the few appearances we've seen from Roy Moore since this slew of sexual assault allegations has been made against him, including that he sexually assaulted a 14-year-old girl when he was in his 30s.

[08:35:17] Now, Roy Moore has continued to deny these allegations. And with two weeks left to go in this race, he's vowing not only to continue to fight, but he's now promising to take the gloves off.

Now, in this room of about 200 supporters or so in Henagar, Alabama, Roy Moore invoked the president's name and a certain investigation into Russian meddling.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ROY MOORE (R), ALABAMA SENATE CANDIDATE: They're trying to hide the true issues, which (INAUDIBLE) people of this country and this state that they want resolved. It's no different than when "The Washington Post" brought out the Russian investigation at a time when President Trump is trying to get his agenda passed.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

COLLINS: Now, this is a race that most voters believe will come down to Roy Moore and his Democratic opponent, Doug Jones. But with just days left in the race, John, another person has decided to enter the race, and that is somebody who has been a top aide to the White House chief of staff, John Kelly, a retired Marine, Lee Busby, who was on CNN this morning.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

COL. LEE BUSBY (RET.) (I), LAUNCHING ALABAMA SENATE WRITE-IN CANDIDATE: I simply was not happy with my choices. And had I thought that was simply a personal issue, I certainly wouldn't have gone to this extreme. But the more people I talked to, the more convinced I became that that feeling is widespread here in Alabama.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

COLLINS: Now there's a feeling in that room last night, John, that this will be a close race when voters go to the polls here in Alabama in just two weeks. But despite these allegations made against Roy Moore, those who are supporting him still believe he can pull this off, John.

BERMAN: All right, Kaitlan Collins for us watching things on the ground in Alabama.

Kaitlan, thanks so much.

All right, the tax bill hangs in the balance. So what is the one thing Republican senators want to hear from the president? We'll ask, next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[9:41:25] BERMAN: This morning, Ivanka Trump is in India to kick off the Global Entrepreneurship Summit. Conspicuously absent from the summit put on by the U.S. State Department, by the way, any senior State Department officials. Sources tell CNN this was the decision of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. And he's doing it at least partially to snub Ivanka Trump.

Joining us now live at the State Department, CNN's senior diplomatic correspondent Michelle Kosinski.

Michelle, what's going on here?

MICHELLE KOSINSKI, CNN SENIOR DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT: Hey, John.

Well, this is a big event. The State Department has put it on now for several years. It was an Obama era creation. But this year, first daughter and senior White House adviser Ivanka Trump is leading the U.S. delegation. There are some senior U.S. government officials that are going with her, but none of them are from the State Department even though the State Department puts this on. So when you look at past years, you see the Secretary of State Kerry went multiple times. President Obama went to several of these. High-level State Department officials. So it surprised people, not only within this building, but also at the White House that the State Department this year seemed to make it a rule that nobody above a certain low-level of ranking was allowed to go on this trip. Not even the assistant secretary of state for this region.

So we talked to somebody who is a former diplomat, who has actually worked on this event in past years. And he called this extraordinary and virtually unprecedented that the State Department wouldn't send its top people or at least one of them to this large-scale event, especially because it's in India and the State Department lately has been talking about how they've been trying to forge these greater ties, especially economy.

So sources tell us not only within the State Department but again a source close to the White House that this is because Secretary of State Tillerson and his inner circle do not like the fact that it's Ivanka Trump that's headlining this. That she is taking center stage. One source told us, that is close to the White House, that Tillerson doesn't love the idea that first Jared Kushner now Ivanka Trump are stepping over his role. That he has a disagreement with what White House over what the role of secretary of state is.

And, you know, when we asked the State Department multiple times, first of all, just send us a list of all of the high-ranking or any of the State Department people who are going, and they -- they just won't send it. When we asked them, well, who is the highest ranking State Department person going, they just don't answer. And when we asked them for a statement on this controversy over a perception that it's a snub by Secretary of State Tillerson, they sent us an on the record statement, but it was just about the summit. It didn't address this issue at all and it certainly didn't deny it.

BERMAN: All right, fascinating. Michelle Kosinski at the State Department, thanks so much.

President Trump heads to the Capitol in just a little bit to talk to Republicans about his tax plan. What do they want to hear?

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[09:48:56] BERMAN: The Republican tax plan faces a crucial test in just hours. Lose a single Republican vote and it could stall in committee.

Joining me now is a key player in all this, Ohio Republican Rob Portman, a member of the Senate Finance Committee.

Senator, always great to see you. I have a ton of tax questions right here I want to get to.

SEN. ROB PORTMAN (R), OHIO: John, excellent. Good to be with you.

BERMAN: But I want to ask you -- I want to get you on the record on what the president said about Elizabeth Warren because I don't think we can just let these things pass without recognizing them. He called her Pocahontas in a room full of Native American war heroes. Native Americans leaders we've spoken to say at worst this is racist at best it's in poor taste. Is it in any way appropriate, sir?

PORTMAN: Well, first of all, the two of them have had a back and forth for a long time, usually on Twitter, and perhaps they think it, you know, it benefits both of them with regard to their bases. But -- so I'm not going to get into that.

I do think honoring those code talkers, the Navajo code talkers, by the way, many of whom are no longer with us because these are World War II veterans, should have been the focus of that meeting. And, wow, what an incredible story and what they did for our country.

BERMAN: It's such an incredible story. So, again, you do not think it's appropriate to use a name like that in such a setting?

[09:50:05] PORTMAN: Well, again, he and Elizabeth Warren go back and forth with their name calling and, you know, that's not my style, as you know. But I stay out of that. But I do think that that event should have been about honoring some real patriots who stepped forward to help our country at a critical time.

BERMAN: So, senator, the tax plan, the Republican tax plan. The CBO estimates that those making under \$30,000 a year, they'd be worse off by 2019. Those making under \$75,000 would be worse off by 2027.

Let's take those making under \$30,000. How do you explain to them that this tax plan is fair for them?

PORTMAN: Well, it -- what it shows is that because of the way the individual health care mandate is scored by the budget process we got to use here, that some of those people are not going to get as much tax credit, refundable tax credit, from the government for their health care and some of them will not choose to be on Medicaid. So those making under \$30,000, the vast majority of those folks, as you know, have no tax -- income tax liability. The question is, how much of a refundable credit.

I don't agree with what the CBO has said with regard to the individual mandate. In fact, they're changing their own model now. I'm not sure that somebody who is offered Medicaid is not going to take it, which is not a cost to that person, just because there's not an individual mandate. But that's what they say. So that has to do with health care.

Otherwise, those folks, of course, do get tax relief because we double the child tax credit. We double the standard deduction. The child tax credit refundability is increased. And for someone making \$50,000, there's a tax cut in here of 36 percent for a \$50,000 family with two kids, 36 percent tax cut. Look at the Joint Committee on Taxation numbers. \$85,000 a year, there's a 20 percent tax cut. Yes, it does expire over the ten-year period, but so did the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts. That's typical. And Congress chose for about 90 percent of the people, as you know, to extend those tax cuts. So that's what I hope will happen again. There also will be an opportunity on the floor of the Senate to make

those tax cuts permanent. And if eight Democrats join the Republicans, that will happen.

BERMAN: I'm glad you brought up 2001 and 2003. You know, you weren't a member of the Bush administration then. You ultimately were. But were a big supporter of those tax cuts.

One of the things about them is they cut taxes on everyone. Everyone saw tax cuts. Some saw bigger tax cuts than others, but everyone saw a tax cut. With this plan, many people will see tax cuts, but there will be some, in some cases many in many places, that will see tax increases right away.

PORTMAN: Well, I think if you look at this, again, from an objective point of view, look at the Joint Committee numbers, which is the non-partisan group up here, [jct.gov](http://jct.gov), you can go on and check it out, to your viewers, what you'll see is that for every single income bracket, and there's seven of them now, there is tax relief. So on an aggregate basis, there's huge tax relief.

The biggest issue you're pointing to is the state and local tax issue. And you're right, particularly people at the higher end, this goes -- it's a -- it's a regressive tax in the sense that over 50 percent of the benefit goes to families making over \$200,000 a year. And for states like New York and states like California, not having that deduction any longer does kick some of those folks who are upper middle class or high income folks into a situation where they don't get that deduction.

But there are two things they should take into account. One is the alternative minimum tax takes that away right now and we're repealing the Alternative Minimum Tax, which is a complication. So they don't actually get that deduction often now.

And second, the fact that this is a philosophical question, I guess. Should the federal government be subsidizing states that are relatively high taxed.

BERMAN: Right.

PORTMAN: In other words, should you get a benefit in a high tax state or should there be sort of a level playing field here where my constituents in Ohio, who have an average state and local tax deduction of about \$2,500, be paying to subsidize folks in New York County, who have an average of \$25,000 in terms of their deduction. And so that's a -- it's a philosophical question.

BERMAN: I understand. And they say, by the way, the New Yorkers, the New Jersians, Californians say that they are overtaxed as it is. They pay a greater percentage in federal taxes that then gets distributed to the rest of the country. That's their argument.

PORTMAN: Yes.

BERMAN: I do want to say, because you pointed to the Joint Committee on Taxation, their website, I want to draw people's attention to your Senate website where you talk about the national debt. You've been a crusader against deficits and debt for some time and you note that the nearly \$20 trillion in debt now, if they were \$1 bills, would cover the entire state of Ohio, you know, 1.77 times. It would fill the Ohio Stadium, the horseshoe at Ohio State, nine times over. And it would buy the Cleveland Indians and Cincinnati Reds 11,000 times over. These are great numbers.

PORTMAN: That's on my website, yes.

BERMAN: They're on your -- it is.

PORTMAN: Yes.

BERMAN: Yet you're going to vote for a plan that actually increases that debt by more than a trillion dollars.

PORTMAN: Well, I don't agree with that. I think it will actually decrease the debt. And, by the way, it's not the only answer. Obviously we have to restrain spending. But if you don't grow the economy, John, you're not going to be able to get out from under this. And I strongly believe that the 1.9 percent economic growth number that we have to use, again under the budget process, is wrong.

[09:55:04] I mean I think this tax relief, because of the changes, frankly, on the business side, that help workers become competitive again, you know, we have the highest rate in the world among all the developed countries on



our business side and that's driving jobs and investment overseas.

BERMAN: Understood.

PORTMAN: Three times as many U.S. companies have been bought by foreign companies in the last year than the reverse. So this is -- this is going to really help on economic growth.

There was a good letter yesterday by the Hoover Institute on this issue. It's going to increase economic growth. I believe in this strongly. I've been fighting for this for many, many years.

BERMAN: Did not -- did the 2001 or 2003 tax cuts, did they reduce the national debt?

PORTMAN: Well, they were not focused on this sort of pro-growth policy. You know, as you know, they didn't go into the business side. They focused on the individual tax relief, which is very important. But this, for the first time in 31 years, we are actually doing the major reforms.

It's not about tax cuts to me as much as it is about tax reform. And if you do these tax reforms and do them right, there's no question we're going to have more economic growth. And, again, the projection we have is 1.9 percent. We just grew at 3 percent and 3.1 percent the last two quarters. Projection out yesterday I saw showing 4 percent growth next year from an -- this is an independent group. But if you do that, there will not be any increase in the deficit. In fact, you'll have a decrease in the deficit over the next ten years.

BERMAN: Well --

PORTMAN: And that's what I hope happens. And I -- look, I -- this has been bipartisan in the past, by the way, doing these kinds of reforms we're talking about because unless you do these kinds of reforms, we continue to lose jobs and investment overseas. And if we do them --

BERMAN: Senator --

PORTMAN: We can actually bring back a lot of those earnings that are trapped overseas and that will help the economy a lot and it will help increase revenues.

BERMAN: Senator Rob Portman of Ohio, we're out of time. Great to have you with us, sir.

PORTMAN: Thanks, John. Thanks for having me on again. Take care.

BERMAN: Roy Moore all of a sudden taking off the gloves. We're two weeks away from the election in Alabama The Senate election there. He is now railing against what he calls dirty politics.

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