

issue that we know ultimately will not become law. It impedes the opportunity to do what, without almost any exception, Members of the House and Senate have agreed to.

True FAA reform will dramatically increase the ability of American aviation manufacturers and businesses to create jobs. This short-term extension represents yet another regrettably missed opportunity to do just that.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO ROZANN KIMPTON

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, every week, I have been coming to the floor to talk about my State and what I think makes it the greatest State in the country and in the world. We like to celebrate and recognize somebody in Alaska who is making a difference for their community, for the State, and for the country, and we like to call these extraordinary Alaskan individuals our Alaskan of the Week.

Like many of us here in the Senate, I spent a lot of time recently in August traveling throughout my home State, and wherever I went, I met strong, generous, versatile Alaskans, many of whom survive in some of the harshest conditions on the planet but still have time for their communities and their families and their neighbors. But, like in many places around the country, I also saw the scourge of addiction that is tearing apart communities and tearing apart families.

We have all heard how addiction is often passed down through generations. There are many in Alaska and many throughout the country who are determined to break this intergenerational cycle of addiction and many who are succeeding. We don't always hear about them, but there are many. So this afternoon I wish to introduce my colleagues to 81-year-old Rozann Kimpton, our Alaskan of the Week, who is doing that and a lot more.

Rozann and her husband moved to Alaska from Washington State in 1958, and they immediately settled in. They ran businesses together, including a small retail store, and then they got into construction and contracting. They raised two children. They were a team. About 10 years ago, they moved to a large plot of land in Wasilla, AK—over 50 acres—to spend time in retirement, and they made plans: gardening, traveling around the world. But it didn't take long for Rozann to recognize that something was wrong—very wrong—in her family, particularly with what was happening to two of her great-grandchildren, Luke and Amanda. They were living in a situation that was harmful to them and they needed help.

At this point, Rozann's husband was also suffering from his own illness—cancer—but the two of them took Luke and Amanda in and adopted them. "It was the only way to make sure they were safe," Rozann said. "And when a kid needs to be taken care of, and when

a mommy and daddy can't, you do it," she said. "I couldn't live with myself knowing that they were in danger and I did nothing." This is Rozann talking about her two great-grandkids.

That was 10 years ago. Rozann, now a widow, lives with Amanda and Luke on that big plot of land in Wasilla. Amanda is a senior in high school, and Luke is an eighth grader. They are great kids. As a matter of fact, I just had the opportunity to visit with them in my office yesterday.

Amanda loves geometry. She plays a violin with the Wasilla Youth Orchestra and drums and dances with the Intertribal Drum Group in Anchorage. Luke's big dream is to join the Navy, which I think is great.

The three of them volunteer in their community, helping foster kids. Amanda makes blankets for the foster kids. Every Sunday, they drive over 100 miles to attend Emanuel Presbyterian Church in Anchorage, which is like a second home to all of them.

In addition to all of this, Rozann is the area volunteer coordinator for Volunteers of America Grandfamilies, a grandparents support group. Once a month, she has a picnic for her fellow grandparents and other parents who have adopted kids. The kids play games, eat hamburgers and hot dogs, and adults sit around the campfire, share stories, and encourage one another in all the work they are doing. She is in constant contact with about 25 families, and whenever she spots someone she thinks might need help with their kids, their grandkids, or their great-grandkids, she gives them her card.

"I am not a shy person," she said. "I will talk to anyone who looks like they are struggling, and I am particularly good at spotting grandparents who are raising kids"—grandparents who are raising kids throughout our great Nation.

As the opioid crisis is hitting Alaska, just like it is hitting so many other States, she is seeing more and more grandparents stepping in. "It is a plague," she said, "but the most important thing is to help the children as early as possible, and to do what we can to make sure they don't carry on that plague."

Rozann Kimpton is here right now in Washington, DC. As I mentioned, I had a great meeting with her yesterday. She is here to attend a banquet where her efforts will be recognized. She is the 2017 recipient of the Alaska Angels in Adoption Award and will be recognized by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption.

Rozann, thank you for your warmth and for all your hard work for Alaska. Congratulations on your award, and congratulations on being our Alaskan of the Week.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. President, an issue I have been coming to the Senate floor to speak about for the past couple of years is an issue that I don't think we focus on

enough here in the Congress, here in the Senate, and that is the key issue of America's economic growth.

With the exception of national security, strong, robust economic growth is probably the most important issue we can be focused on in this body. We certainly have many challenges in this country, but so many of them are made easier when the American economy is strong, when job opportunities are plentiful and optimism in the future because of that strong economic growth is high.

So how have we been doing over the past decade? I want everyone to take a look at this chart. The answer is, not very well; not very well at all. This chart shows the gross domestic product—GDP—decade after decade through different administrations, Democratic and Republican, over the last several decades. So if we take a look at the chart, we see Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Clinton, Bush 41 and 43, and President Obama. We see where levels have been. We see that over the years, over the decades, the average economic growth is about right here—about 4 percent.

There has been a lot of talk about what has made America great and what makes America great. This is what makes America great: strong, robust, economic growth decade after decade. That is the key.

So what happened over the past decade, right here? If we take a look right here at this red line, that is 3 percent. That is not the traditional level. Traditional levels over 200-plus years of American history are closer to 4 percent. But 3 percent GDP growth is considered OK—not bad, not great, but pretty good, and something we should all aspire to, something we should hit.

When we look at this chart, we see that in the last decade we never hit it, not even 3 percent GDP growth—more like 1.5, 2 percent. As a matter of fact, President Obama is the first President in American history where we never hit 3 percent GDP growth for a year.

I know what some may be thinking. This seems to be a pretty important issue, right? Economic growth last decade not even hitting 3 percent. Why wasn't the press writing about that? We didn't hear many stories in the press about this very important issue—a decade of lost economic growth. Many of us come to the floor to talk about this critical issue, and there is a yawn in the Press Gallery. There is no interest. It is hard to understand why.

One theory I have is that if you look at our country more broadly, these are the numbers—very, very weak growth—but certain places in the country over the last 10 years have actually done very well, especially this city, Washington, DC. It has been growing very strong, with probably 5, 6 percent growth. Some other places, some of the coastal big cities, including New York, San Francisco, and Boston, are all doing well—way higher than 3 percent. They are growing stronger. So the

press, in my view, is probably not that interested in this number because in places like Washington, everything seemed to be going great. But it wasn't going great.

Think about this: If Washington or L.A. or New York or San Francisco are growing at 3 or 4 percent growth and yet the country is at about 1.5 or 2 percent, then there are probably huge parts of America that are actually shrinking, not growing at all.

These charts talk about economic growth, GDP. It can sound a little bit wonky. Really, GDP is a marker for the health of our economy. It is an indicator of American progress. It is a proxy for the American dream and optimism in the future.

As this chart shows, we have had a sick economy over the last 10 years, a lost decade of economic growth. The press hasn't written much about it, and when they have, they have typically bought the line of the previous administration saying: Hey, look, we know that the traditional levels of economic growth are close to 4 percent. Look at Clinton, look at Reagan—4½, 5, 6. We know that is the case. We know 3 percent is OK. But we haven't hit that in the last 10 years, so what is wrong? Well, the press started buying the line from the last administration: That is the "new normal." We can't hit 3 percent anymore. We certainly can't hit 4 percent anymore. So 1½, 2 percent is America hitting on all cylinders. I believe that is a surrender. I believe dumbing down our expectations for economic growth is a retreat from the American dream.

As you know, the American people aren't buying this. They are not buying the dumbing down. They are not saying: Oh yeah, we can live with this 1½ percent growth. Sure. No problem. They are wise, and they aren't buying the dumbing down.

We all saw the book recently released by former Senator and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and her book is entitled "What Happened." What happened? This is what happened: Our citizens saw the American dream slipping away after a lost decade of economic growth, and they weren't ready to surrender to the new normal.

What do we need to focus on in the Senate? We have to start moving beyond this. We have to. We need policies that are going to focus on reigniting growth—the growth that Democrats and Republicans have supported for decades. What is that? I think there is a lot of agreement—infrastructure, less burdensome regulations, energy. America has enormous supplies of energy that we can take advantage of. Yet the issue we are starting to debate now in the Senate is tax reform.

As we debate this and work in a bipartisan way—I have heard a lot of my colleagues say that we do need to undertake tax reform. We need to keep asking ourselves, on all these policies, what they will do to reignite growth, to reignite the American dream, to

allow hard-working American families to keep more of their paychecks, and to return to the optimism that comes with a robust economy, not just along the coast of America but throughout the entire country, to get back to that optimism and growth. That is what I am going to be doing as we undertake this debate on tax reform.

The Trump administration is off to an OK start. The first quarter—again, kind of a hangover from the Obama years—1.2 percent growth. That is not good at all. The last quarter, second quarter, was 3.1. It hit above 3 percent, which is what the President says his policies are meant to do. As long as they are focused on that, I certainly am going to be somebody who wants to support those kinds of pro-growth policies, and I think it is imperative, whether it is tax reform, infrastructure, regulatory reform, or energy, that we all come together in this body and make sure we work together so the next decade of growth in America does not look like this last one and gets us over 3 percent, gets us back to traditional levels of growth. I don't think there is anything more important we can do in the Senate than getting back to those important levels of growth for our country and our citizens.

TRIBUTE TO TYLER ROBERTS AND MICHAEL SOUKUP

Mr. President, I wish to say a few words about some of my staff who have done a great job serving Alaskans and who are leaving my office soon. I am going to miss them a lot. One is here now, and he will probably be embarrassed that I am talking about him on the Senate floor—Tyler Roberts.

Tyler has been a legislative assistant of mine, handling healthcare, budget, tax. He is leaving to join the private sector. He has been with me from the beginning, 2½ years ago. I can tell you this: He has worked long hours serving the people of our great State and has set a tone in the office of hard work, diligent work, good-natured, and we are going to miss Tyler very much.

I wish to also recognize Michael Soukup. Michael is our digital director and press secretary. From educating Alaskans on what we are doing in DC to designing poster boards like this, creating awesome graphics and videos, Michael has been an invaluable member of my team as well. He is an artist. Like all good artists, his work has a distinctive look and style. If you see one of my photo montages on Facebook and you think it is well-done, which we do, you can thank Michael. We call them Soukup specials.

Tyler has also worked tirelessly for me and Alaska, his home State. I know that he will bring the same amount of creativity, ingenuity, and integrity to all he does as he moves into the next phase of his career.

Thank you to all my staff.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DISASTER TAX RELIEF AND AIRPORT AND AIRWAY EXTENSION ACT OF 2017

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3823.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3823) to amend title 49, United States Code, to extend authorizations for the airport improvement program, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the funding and expenditure authority of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, to provide disaster tax relief, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Cassidy amendment at the desk be agreed to and the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time.

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

The amendment (No. 1108) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To strike the provisions relating to development of a private flood insurance market)

Strike title IV.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

Mr. McCONNELL. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 3823), as amended, was passed.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

PUERTO RICO AND U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
RECOVERY EFFORT

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am here for the third time in as many days to talk about this Nation's response to a humanitarian crisis affecting millions of Americans—the people