

leaves American companies at a disadvantage.

These foreign companies can underbid American companies for new business simply because they don't have to add as much in taxes into the price of their products or services. When foreign companies beat out American companies for new business, it is not just American companies that suffer. It is American workers. It is the American workers employed by these companies who live and work in literally every State in the Union, and it is the American workers who work for the small and medium-sized companies that form the supply chain here in the United States.

For every American company that operates in countries around the world, there are countless companies here at home that supply the raw material for the products that are sold abroad—businesses that handle the packaging and shipping of those products and enterprises that supply support services like accounting, legal, and payroll services.

America's global companies rely on a web of supporting businesses that spans the country, and when these global companies struggle, so do these supporting businesses and their workers.

By transitioning from a worldwide tax system to a territorial tax system, we will not be just boosting wages, jobs, and opportunities for American workers employed by these global companies, but we will also be increasing wages, jobs, and opportunities for workers at the countless small and medium-sized businesses throughout our country that make up the supply chain for America's global companies.

Finally, our tax plan will tackle the other key part of improving the playing field for American workers; that is, lowering the tax rates on small businesses.

Small businesses are incredibly important for new job creation, but like big companies, right now small businesses are being strangled by high tax rates. That can make it difficult for small businesses to even survive, much less thrive and expand their operations. Lowering small business tax rates and making it easier for small businesses to recover their invested capital more quickly will free up the money that small business owners need to expand their businesses to add workers or to give employees a raise.

Together, these aspects of tax reform are essential to reversing the lackluster economy of the last 8 years. Americans deserve better, and tax reform can be the key to putting this country back on the path to solid, sustainable economic growth.

Mr. President, before I close today, I wish to switch gears for a minute and talk about judicial nominations. We have had the chance to confirm some excellent nominees so far this year, many of whom Democrats have ultimately supported. But despite this

fact, Democrats have insisted on delaying the process of almost every single nomination to a district or circuit court. That is pretty much the definition of partisanship—when you obstruct nominees based not on any disagreement you have with them but simply because you don't like the person who is doing the nominating.

Democrats' delays are ultimately pretty pointless. We are not going to stop confirming nominees just because Democrats are dragging out the process, but these delays are a disservice to the American people. There are a lot of important issues that the Senate needs to be debating, from spending bills to tax reform, and the time that we waste on pointless partisan exercises is time taken from those important issues.

While Democrats' partisanship is frustrating, there is a much more serious issue that has come up during these judicial confirmations; that is, the anti-religious sentiment displayed by some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle during the hearing on judicial nominee Amy Barrett's nomination, which we will be voting on this week.

Ms. Barrett's qualifications are well known. The American Bar Association, which rates judicial nominees, has given her its highest rating of "well qualified."

As my colleague the minority leader has said, the American Bar Association's evaluation is the "gold standard by which judicial candidates are judged."

Despite her judicial qualifications, it became clear in the hearing on her nomination that some of my colleagues think she should be disqualified because she is a practicing Catholic. That is right. Apparently, practicing your religion is now grounds for declaring you unfit to be a judge.

Here is what the Constitution has to say about that. This is from article VI: "No religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States."

Let me repeat that: "No religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States."

In other words, in the United States, you can't be disqualified from serving as a judge because you are a believing Catholic or a believing member of any faith. The only qualification the Constitution imposes is a commitment to uphold the Constitution.

Yet the second-ranking Democrat in the Senate apparently thought it was appropriate to ask Ms. Barrett if she was a practicing member of her religion, with the implication that if she was, it might jeopardize her fitness for being a judge.

Democrats' questioning is not going to stop Ms. Barrett's nomination, but it is simply disturbing, nonetheless. It is a scary thing when leaders of a major political party imply that there is no role for religious people in public life.

I don't need to tell anybody that that is contrary to everything our Founders stood for. The right to be able to practice religion freely—yes, in public, too—was so fundamental to the Founders' understanding of liberty that they made it the very first freedom mentioned in the Bill of Rights.

People of faith have made incalculable contributions to our country, and faith has driven some of the greatest movements in American history, from the abolitionist movement to the civil rights movement.

I hope the Democratic Party doesn't move further down the path of excluding religious people from public life. If they ever succeed in excluding people of faith from government, they will have destroyed one of the freedoms on which our country rests.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for an appropriate amount of time to finish my remarks.

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

TRIBUTE TO CHRIS APASSINGOK

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, one of the privileges of being in the Senate is actually being able to preside, as the Presiding Officer is doing right now—to sit at the Chair and listen and watch my colleagues talk about issues that matter to them, and a lot of times issues that matter to their States. In this amazing country of ours we have so many great States, great stories, and great traditions. When I am presiding, some relate to Texas, where the current Presiding Officer is from, celebrating our unique traditions, while still appreciating that at our best we share values as Americans together—opportunity, liberty, justice, and fairness. It really is one of the things that makes the Senate a great body and what makes us strong as a nation.

One of the things I like to do is to come to the Senate floor and talk about some of the traditions in my State—some of the things that I think make Alaska the greatest State in the Nation. I know some of my colleagues will not fully agree with that, but we all get to brag about our State. When I do that, I like to talk about an individual whom we recognize as the Alaskan of the Week. Often, it is somebody who is doing something in a remote part of Alaska whom not a lot of people know about. It is very important to share that with my colleagues in the Senate and other colleagues watching on TV.

Today, I would like to recognize a young Alaskan from Gambell, AK, named Chris Apassingok, a young whaler who is helping to keep the tradition that we have in Alaska—Native whaling—alive and well. He is our Alaskan of the Week.

This year, Chris was a keynote speaker at the Elders and Youth Conference, which is a precursor to the

Alaska Federation of Natives conference held each year in one of our cities. It is the largest annual gathering in the United States of any Native peoples, and there is nothing like it in all the country. AFN, as we call it in Alaska, is certainly a highlight of my year. My wife and I and our kids always try to get there.

Let me spend a few minutes talking about why Chris's speech about whaling was so important and what happened after he landed a huge bowhead whale in Alaska and why that was so inspiring for so many in my great State and, really, around the country.

Gamble, AK, is where Chris comes from, a Yupik village of about 700 people on St. Lawrence Island, on the northwest edge of Alaska. It is 1 of 11 Alaska communities that participate in two whaling seasons, recognized and authorized by the International Whaling Commission. These are subsistence communities. What does that mean? They are subsistence communities because whale meat is actually a necessity in feeding these communities.

I should point out that we have no road systems at all in Northern Alaska. Most of Alaska has no roads connected from community to community, and certainly not in Gambell. The Presiding Officer and I have had the opportunity to travel around Alaska. He has seen our great State. He knows that many communities are only accessible by air or seasonal barge. Some areas can only be reached at certain times of the year because of the weather. These communities need food. They need whales.

The annual bowhead whale migration provides the largest subsistence resource available in these remote areas of our great State. Even so, when a whale is taken, the sharing does not stop with the residents of the community. Each whale produces between 6 and 25 tons of food, on average. This meat is shared with other subsistence communities in our State and with family members and elders throughout the State. That is a hugely important part of Alaskan Native culture. This is another example of the resourcefulness of the Alaskan Native peoples, which has enabled them to survive in the Arctic—with some of the toughest weather and conditions anywhere in the world for millennia—and which has shaped the culture of Alaska and the character of our State today.

Back to Chris, he is an extraordinary hunter, even by the standards of Gambell, a community of extraordinary hunters. He could aim and shoot a rifle at the age of 5. By 11, he had trained himself to strike whales, as one writer put it, “standing steady in the front of the skiff with the gun, riding Bering Sea swells like a snowboarder.”

This past April, Chris and his father set out on a boat in the Bering Sea to do what their ancestors have been doing for thousands of years.

After they got a bearded seal, they spotted a spouting bowhead. Chris took

the first shot, it was accurate, and it was a huge whale, 57 feet 11 inches. It took 2 hours to tow it to shore and 4 days for the community to carve it up. As always, when a whale is landed, it is time for celebration in the community, and this time was no different, but shortly after this, things unfortunately went sour for Chris and the community.

A radical special interest activist, with a large online following, read the story about Chris and the whale and he began to attack Chris and so did many of his followers, from all across the globe—hundreds of people, most of them adults, cyber bullying and attacking a 16-year-old boy from Gambell, AK, who had, at that point, only left his village once in his life.

They were shameful, no respect, no civility, and I mean vicious attacks. I will not repeat them here. It is enough to say they were greatly upset. In the community, Chris, his family, and his mother cried all night. Chris was angry that he and his family were being attacked for partaking in this necessary tradition that his community and his ancestors have been doing for thousands of years—thousands of years.

However, this young man, despite the hateful messages from adults, from adults who live a world away, despite the names they were calling him, Chris, now 17, cut through the noise, stood strong, and gave a great speech at AFN, that he will continue to hunt and feed his family and his community the way his ancestors have done for millennia.

At his speech last week at AFN, he asked: “Will you stand with me as I continue my hunting [traditions of my family]?” The crowd applauded, all of whom rose when he asked this: “Will you stand with me” as we continue our subsistence activities that we have undertaken for thousands of years?

I hope everyone across the country stands with this extraordinary young man—truly brave and courageous—as he continues his tradition and his right to hunt and feed his community.

This afternoon, I will be holding a hearing in the Commerce Committee about whaling in Alaska and how necessary it is for subsistence and the survival of these important cultures. I hope all Americans also stand with so many other proud Alaska whalers, protecting their rights to hunt the way their ancestors have hunted.

Thank you, Chris—a young man in Alaska, 17 years old—for standing tall for your people, for all of Alaska. I also want to thank his parents Susan and Daniel for raising such a fine hunter.

Congratulations, Chris, for being our Alaskan of the Week.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. President, I want to follow on with regard to what my colleague and good friend from South Dakota talked about in terms of tax reform. We are debating tax reform now. We are marking up a bill. The Finance Committee has not marked up the bill yet. It is

working on the bill, but as Senator THUNE just mentioned, we have to have one common goal in this body, which tax reform should be driving, and that is the issue of economic growth—the issue of economic growth.

We would think this should not be a partisan issue, but one of the things I am struck by, in my little under 3 years in the Senate, is how little we have talked about economic growth.

I have tried to come down to the Senate floor and speak about this issue a lot. In my view, with the exception of national defense, this is the most important issue Congress can be focused on right here, this issue of growth. How is the U.S. economy doing? Is it strong? Is it weak? Are we healthy or are we sick? By any measure over the last 10 years, we are sick.

I bring this chart to the floor a lot to talk about what has gone on in the last several decades in terms of economic growth. This has the growth rates of every administration dating back to President Eisenhower. If you look at the numbers, this red line is the important line. This is 3 percent GDP growth. It is not great. It is not bad. Since the founding of the Republic, the average since World War II is closer to 4 percent, but 3 percent is OK. It is certainly what we should be focused on in terms of hitting.

If we look at this chart, in certain years, Eisenhower, Kennedy—by the way very bipartisan—we have had very strong growth. When people talk about what makes America great, this is what makes America great: strong economic growth. This is what has driven our country for decades.

We see some of the numbers, Kennedy, Johnson, 5, 6, 7 percent; Reagan, Clinton, 5, 6, 7 percent. Then we look at the last decade—boom, a giant dropoff. We haven't hit 3 percent GDP growth in well over 10 years—well over 10 years. As a matter of fact, President Obama was the first President ever to not hit it.

What happened? Did anyone talk about it? Did the last administration talk about it? They never talked about it. As a matter of fact, what they did is they started telling Americans: Don't worry. We are going to dumb down expectations. We are going to tell you—despite this chart, despite what this really means—this represents the American dream. Despite the fact that all previous administrations were focused on 3 percent, we are not going to talk about that. We will dumb it down and call this anemic growth back here—1 percent, 1½—the new normal.

What does that mean? That means we are going to surrender. We are going to say, well, this is really America hitting on all cylinders. This is what you as Americans should expect in the future.

I think this idea of the new normal, which a lot of people in DC talk about, is probably one of the most dangerous concepts in Washington, DC, right now. The new normal means that despite