

America's factories are hiring again.

After years of job losses, U.S. manufacturing employment has risen for 18 straight months among those holding production or nonsupervisory jobs, the longest stretch of gains since the mid-1990s.

That is from the Wall Street Journal. The list goes on.

The economic growth we are experiencing is the direct result of Republican policies. Economic growth has accelerated over the past 2 years, thanks to the lifting of the burdensome regulations and a historic reform of our Tax Code.

Before we passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, our Tax Code was acting as a drag on economic growth. Small businesses faced heavy tax burdens that frequently made it difficult for them to expand and create jobs or even to get their businesses off the ground in the first place. America's global businesses faced the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world, which put them at a competitive disadvantage on the international stage.

Of course, all of that had real consequences for American workers. A small business owner facing a huge tax bill was highly unlikely to be able to expand her business or to hire a new employee. A larger business was going to find it hard to create jobs or improve benefits for employees while struggling to stay competitive against foreign businesses paying much less in taxes. So we reformed our Tax Code to make it easier for businesses to grow, create jobs, and expand opportunities for American workers. Now we are seeing the results—economic growth, low unemployment, higher wages, a record-high number of job openings, and more.

Importantly, the benefits of this growth are being experienced widely. The Wall Street Journal reports:

Racial minorities, those with less education and people working in the lowest-paying jobs are getting bigger pay raises and, in many cases, experiencing the lowest unemployment rate ever recorded for their groups. They are joining manufacturing workers, women in their prime working years, Americans with disabilities and those with criminal records, among others, in finding improved job prospects after years of disappointment.

Again, that is from the Wall Street Journal.

The Obama administration was characterized by a weak recovery and years of economic stagnation. There were predictions that 2 percent growth would be the new normal. But Republican economic policies have turned the economy around. Now we need to focus on ways to extend the benefits of tax reform even further and to secure the gains we have made for the long term.

Unfortunately, our colleagues across the aisle are more focused on dismantling the policies that created the growth we are experiencing today. Apparently, it doesn't matter to them that workers are doing better after years of economic stagnation or that jobs and opportunities are increasing.

They are set on dismantling tax reform and raising rates to fund their socialist fantasies. They want to spend \$93 trillion—more money than the GDP of the entire world—to put the government in charge of Americans' healthcare, energy usage, and more.

I wish I were joking, but Democrats' turn toward socialist insanity is all too real. The kinds of tax hikes that would be required to pay for Democrats' proposals would cripple our economy and severely downgrade America's standard of living—not to mention robbing Americans of their freedom to make their own decisions about all the various aspects of their lives.

It is mind-boggling that more and more Democrats are embracing socialism and the less free and less prosperous future it would bring. Let's hope their socialist fantasies stay just that—fantasies—because our economy might never recover from the reality of Democrats' proposals.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, when I hear my friend from South Dakota describe the state of the economy, it is amazing how political amnesia can take over on the floor of the Senate Chamber.

Do you remember the election of 2008 when Barack Obama was elected President of the United States? Was there anything going on with the economy when he took office? Oh, something that the Senator failed to mention—our country was facing the one of the worst recessions in the history of the United States.

You had to go back to the Great Depression to see the impact of this recession on the American economy, and it happened under a Republican President—George W. Bush. President Obama inherited that, and most people will never forget it because in 2008 and 2009, many people saw their savings devastated by the drop in value in the stock market. They saw this economy teetering on the edge and financial institutions failing. This all happened on President George W. Bush's watch. President Obama inherited it and had to turn it around—without the cooperation of the Republican Party, I might add. A handful of them stepped up to join him in a bipartisan effort, but most of them opposed him. He did everything he needed to do to save this economy and then started turning it around with job creation—unprecedented job creation—throughout the 8 years of his term.

Now, of course, along comes a new President who wants to take credit for all of it and, as the Senator from South Dakota suggested, blame President Obama for the state of the economy he inherited. History tells us a different story.

After this tax cut that the Senate Republicans are so proud of, I think you ought to ask the American families paying their taxes now to take a

look at their taxes and tell you how the Trump tax cut helped them as working families. For some, there is some value to it, but for most, there is none. You see, over a long period of time, the vast majority of the benefits of this Republican tax cut go to people in the highest income categories. If there were ever a group who didn't need a break, it is people who are already making millions of dollars each year. Yet this Republican tax cut gave them the break. It added trillions of dollars to our deficit, it helped the richest people in America, and it forgot working families and left them behind. Yet Republican Senators still come to the floor and boast about it with regularity.

There is a better way to approach this. Yes, I want to give tax incentives and tax relief to working families because we know they are not getting the paychecks they need to meet their obligations, to save for the future, and to make sure their kids have a better life. We should be focused on them, not the wealthiest among us—they are doing quite well, thank you. Let's focus on working families instead. The Trump tax cut forgot that.

(Mr. SCOTT of Florida assumed the Chair.)

DIABETES

Mr. President, millions of Americans got up this morning and faced the challenge of diabetes. For most of them, it is now routine to measure their blood sugar and to inject insulin when necessary so that they avoid the terrible outcomes of untreated diabetes.

At the highest levels of government, the person I think about immediately is Sonia Sotomayor, who is an Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Hers is an amazing life story. This woman from a Puerto Rican family went to law school, became recognized as a talented and brilliant lawyer, and eventually ascended to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

I got to meet her during the period of time when she was going through her nomination process. She slipped and fell at an airport in New York and broke her ankle and couldn't get around as much as she wanted to, so she parked herself in my office upstairs and invited Senators to come in to meet her. Between those meetings, I stepped in the room and got to know her and learned a lot about her.

It turns out, to no surprise, that this wonderful Supreme Court Justice from the Bronx is a passionate fan of the New York Yankees baseball team. We talked about baseball, and I said to her: Occasionally, the Yankees play the Cubs at Wrigley Field. Would you join me there?

She said: Sure. Invite me.

Well, I wasn't sure she would actually show up if I did, but I invited her. A few years ago, Justice Sotomayor came to Wrigley Field. She was a great sport. They had a Cubs jersey for her to wear, which I am sure she didn't exactly feel comfortable in, and she went

out and threw the first pitch. We had a wonderful time.

The reason I tell that story is, during the course of that baseball game, as we sat together at Wrigley Field, I noticed that several times she tested herself and her blood sugar because of the diabetes she battles with every day. That is not an uncommon experience with diabetics.

What is uncommon is what has happened to the price of insulin facing people with diabetes in America. You have to go back almost 100 years to the discovery of insulin. This is not a drug that just appeared on the market.

Almost 100 years ago, researchers in Canada ended up discovering insulin extracted from animals, and they ended up making it available to Americans and everyone, for that matter, because they surrendered their patent rights. Those who discovered insulin said: We don't want to make money off of this. This is a lifesaving drug.

Over the years, insulin has evolved from human-based insulin to what is known as analogue insulin and synthetic insulin in different dosage, but the fundamental chemical that is saving the lives of those who suffer from diabetes has been known for almost a century.

What has happened to the cost of the insulin that has been around for many decades? It has risen dramatically. Last week, I took to the floor for the first pharma fleecing award, which went to the three companies that make insulin and sell it in America today. Those companies are Sanofi, Novo Nordisk, and Eli Lilly.

I took them to task for this increasing cost of insulin, a drug that has been around for so long. They are just raising the cost way beyond the reach of many people who have to pay for this lifesaving drug. I told the story of a young man covered by his parent's insurance—thanks to ObamaCare, the Affordable Care Act—who, when he reached age 26, was on his own, managed a restaurant, couldn't afford the insulin dosage that was required, rationed his own insulin, and died as a result of that decision.

I made the point on the floor of the Senate that these pharmaceutical companies are not sensitive to the reality of life and death in what they are charging Americans for the cost of insulin.

Yesterday, there was a news flash. Eli Lilly, a pharmaceutical company, one of the producers of insulin products, announced that they were going to reduce the cost of a generic form of insulin known as Humalog to \$140 a dosage. That is bringing it down from as much as \$329 to \$140—dramatic.

Let's put this in perspective for one moment. We checked the records, and it turns out you can buy that exact product made by that same company for sale in Canada for as little as \$38. They are expecting—I think Eli Lilly is expecting all of us to send flowers to their corporate headquarters in Indian-

apolis—to send flowers because they reduced the cost of their drug from \$329 to \$140 a dosage. I am not going to send them any flowers, and I am not going to express any great gratitude. They are charging Americans, under this new bargain approach, almost four times what Canadians are paying for exactly the same product—four times.

To the other drug companies involved in this that are producing insulin: America is watching. If you are going to continue to kite the cost of this lifesaving drug, pressure is going to grow politically even to the point where the U.S. Senate may take action. I think that day is coming.

So, for Eli Lilly: Nice first step. When you bring the cost of insulin in the United States for the same products that you are selling in Canada to the same level, then I will send you some flowers.

NOMINATION OF ALLISON JONES RUSHING

Mr. President, we have three judges before us on the floor of the Senate this week. It turns out that the filling of judicial vacancies is the highest single priority of the Republican leadership in the Senate.

Senator MITCH MCCONNELL, the Republican leader, has gone to extraordinary, precedent-breaking lengths to fill vacancies. Of course, the most notorious example was when Senator MCCONNELL, then in charge of the Republican majority, announced that despite the death of Justice Scalia and a vacancy on the highest court of the land, he would refuse to fill that vacancy for almost 1 year because President Obama was in office.

The man President Obama wanted to put in that position, Merrick Garland from the D.C. Circuit Court, was widely respected by Democrats and Republicans alike, but his qualifications meant nothing to Senator MCCONNELL. The end game, in his mind, was the chance that a Republican President might be elected and fill that vacancy with a Republican nominee.

Well, Senator MCCONNELL's dream came true when Donald Trump was elected President, and he turned around and nominated Justice Gorsuch, who now serves on the Supreme Court, filling the Scalia vacancy. That was the most extreme example that we have, in the history of the U.S. Senate, of the defiance of tradition and precedent, a defiance by Senator MCCONNELL with one goal in mind: to make sure that the judicial branch of our government became a political branch of our government, to make sure that as many Republican conservatives, some with the most extreme views, were appointed to the bench. That has been his goal, and he pursues that goal to this day.

There are three nominations before us that amply demonstrate his efforts. When Donald Trump became President, Senate Republicans stopped their obstruction of judicial nominations and started moving nominations through at a breakneck speed.

During the last 2 years, Republicans in the Senate bragged about filling the courts with Trump nominees at record pace. The Republican philosophy, when it comes to Trump judges, seems to be, in Senator MCCONNELL's words, "plow right through" no matter how questionable the nominee's credentials or judgment.

There are three more confirmation votes scheduled this week. Let me tell you about these nominees whom they want to put on the court.

Allison Jones Rushing is President Trump's nominee to fill a North Carolina seat on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. For those who are students of the Constitution, you know that the circuit court of appeals is the highest court below the Supreme Court.

Allison Jones Rushing checks a lot of the standard Trump nominee boxes. She is a member of the Federalist Society, an absolute requirement if Trump is going to nominate you for a lifetime appointment to the Federal bench, and—this is a recurring theme as well—she clerked for Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

She is 36 years old. She has practiced law for 9 years. How many cases has she tried to verdict or judgment? Four. Has she been the lead attorney on any of those cases? No. She is not a member of the bar association of the State of North Carolina, the State in which she would sit if she is confirmed. That is the most scant, weakest legal resume imaginable for someone who is seeking a lifetime appointment to the second highest court of the land.

At our hearing—which, by the way, was held during a Senate recess over the objection of committee Democrats; we weren't even in town when her hearing was scheduled—Senator KENNEDY of Louisiana, who is becoming famous for this, started questioning her about her breadth of legal experience.

Senator KENNEDY is a real lawyer. On the Republican side, he has put some of Trump's nominees on the spot by asking them some pretty tough questions about legal procedure in a courtroom.

Senator KENNEDY said: "I think, to be a really good federal judge, you've got to have some life experience." Ms. Rushing struggled to describe how her life experience actually prepared her for this lifetime appointment to the second highest Federal court.

Senator KENNEDY made a valid point. The fact that a judicial nominee meets all of the litmus tests of being a loyal Republican doesn't mean the nominee has the experience or the legal ability to be a good Federal judge. It is inconceivable to me that in the State of North Carolina, they couldn't find a qualified and experienced conservative Republican judge.

The Federal circuit courts are critically important. Since the vast majority of cases don't reach the Supreme Court, the circuit courts are often the last word. This is a position where experience matters, and, unfortunately, Ms. Rushing doesn't have enough of it. I am going to oppose her.