

enforced disappearance. If there were ever, ever something that is evil, bad, wrong, it is what he has done. The action of the Assad regime has resulted in the deaths—as I indicated—of countless innocent civilians and has sewn discord and disarray across the regime.

Yet Assad has repeatedly lied to the world about using chemical weapons. He loves to get on these shows. The U.S. journalists go over there, and he sits there before us talking all of these lies about what he has not done. There are dead people—hundreds of thousands of them there. There are barrel bombs, cluster bombs. He targets civilians. He starves them, demonstrating again and again what a terrible person he is and someone who cannot be believed about anything he says.

I am going to submit a Senate resolution condemning the actions of the Assad regime and its military forces for these crimes they have carried out against humanity. This legislation will express the Senate support for the referral of these evil acts that Assad has perpetrated and that have also been perpetrated by other Syrian officials and of course by the military leaders to an appropriate international tribunal.

Also, I have to say, it turns my stomach to hear people talk about making a peace deal in Syria and having Assad be a part of that deal. How could we do that? This resolution will make clear the Senate's opposition to any role for Bashar al-Assad in any final settlement of that civil war. I am confident my Senate colleagues will join me in condemning the Assad regime and its unthinkable campaign of evil against its own people.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, we will have a busy day of voting today. Senators should expect two rollcall votes at approximately 10:45 a.m. this morning and up to six rollcall votes starting at 2 p.m. to finish the antitrafficking bill. I filed cloture on the Lynch nomination last night, and under the regular order, that cloture vote would occur 1 hour after the Senate convenes tomorrow.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 1035

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1035) to extend authority relating to roving surveillance, access to business records, and individual terrorists as agents of foreign powers under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION AND LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, help is finally on the way for the thousands of enslaved victims who suffer unspeakable abuse in the shadows. These victims often have nowhere safe to sleep. They often have no safe place to turn to. And if they do try to escape, many risk being treated by the justice system like criminals instead of the victims they truly are.

These victims deserve the help the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act would provide. It is a human rights bill that victims groups and advocates have called "the most comprehensive and thoughtful piece of anti-trafficking legislation currently pending" and one that provides unprecedented support to domestic victims of trafficking, who are all too often invisible and underserved.

We are relieved we can finally say that we will pass it today and that the Senate won't violate longstanding bipartisan Hyde precedent in doing so. But let me be as clear as possible. There was never a logically consistent rationale for the filibuster that held up this bill, and the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service explicitly backed up what Republicans have long said when it confirmed that there are no private funds in this bill.

Thankfully, the filibuster is at an end. Today is a new day. Today, we will finally vote to deliver much needed resources for the victims of modern slavery, with Hyde essentially applying to all funds used for health and medical services, just as it was in the original bill. This is nothing new; it is simply a reaffirmation of the status quo.

We know that today's outcome would not have been possible without the Herculean efforts of my colleague Senator CORNYN. He was absolutely determined to see justice for victims, and we really cannot thank him enough. He negotiated across the aisle in good faith. He never gave up, not even in the bleakest hour. And today, the real focus of all our efforts—the victims of trafficking and modern slavery—can see that help is finally on the way.

We thank Senator CORNYN. We thank his negotiating partners from both parties. We thank Chairman GRASSLEY for

his superb work on this important bill in the Judiciary Committee as well. We look forward to this bill's passage in the House and its signature by the President.

Mr. President, once the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act passes in the Senate, we will turn to consideration of the President's nominee to be Attorney General. That is just what I pledged we would do, and that is what we will do.

TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, I believe we are going to be hearing from the chairman of the Finance Committee shortly. Senator HATCH will be on the floor to discuss bipartisan trade promotion authority legislation which is important because we know that trade is the key to supporting high-quality American jobs and exporting more of the things American workers make and exporting more of the things American farmers grow.

Congress is working again, and this bipartisan bill is another sign of that. No legislation will ever be perfect, but Chairman HATCH and Ranking Member WYDEN, along with Chairman RYAN in the House, put together an agreement of which we can all be proud. It protects and enhances Congress's role in the trade-negotiating process, while making sure Presidents of either party will have the ability to negotiate good agreements that can increase growth in our American economy and support many high-quality American jobs. They are marking up that bill today. I wish them the best of luck. We look forward to having it on the floor in the very near future.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 178, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 178) to provide justice for the victims of trafficking.

Pending:

McConnell (for Cornyn) amendment No. 1120, to strengthen the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act by incorporating additional bipartisan amendments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I wish to say very briefly—I know the distinguished chairman of the Finance Committee is on the floor to speak on an important matter—I would like to express my gratitude to the majority leader for his determination to see this

Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act come to completion in the Senate, which it will this afternoon. It would not have happened without his determination to make it happen.

AMENDMENT NO. 1120 WITHDRAWN

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I withdraw my amendment No. 1120.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment is withdrawn.

AMENDMENT NO. 1124

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I offer amendment No. 1124.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Texas [Mr. CORNYN], for himself, Mrs. MURRAY, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR, proposes an amendment numbered 1124.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To strengthen the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act by incorporating additional bipartisan amendments)

Strike section 101 and insert the following:

SEC. 101. DOMESTIC TRAFFICKING VICTIMS' FUND.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 201 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“§ 3014. Additional special assessment

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Beginning on the date of enactment of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 and ending on September 30, 2019, in addition to the assessment imposed under section 3013, the court shall assess an amount of \$5,000 on any non-indigent person or entity convicted of an offense under—

“(1) chapter 77 (relating to peonage, slavery, and trafficking in persons);

“(2) chapter 109A (relating to sexual abuse);

“(3) chapter 110 (relating to sexual exploitation and other abuse of children);

“(4) chapter 117 (relating to transportation for illegal sexual activity and related crimes); or

“(5) section 274 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1324) (relating to human smuggling), unless the person induced, assisted, abetted, or aided only an individual who at the time of such action was the alien's spouse, parent, son, or daughter (and no other individual) to enter the United States in violation of law.

“(b) SATISFACTION OF OTHER COURT-ORDERED OBLIGATIONS.—An assessment under subsection (a) shall not be payable until the person subject to the assessment has satisfied all outstanding court-ordered fines, orders of restitution, and any other obligation related to victim-compensation arising from the criminal convictions on which the special assessment is based.

“(c) ESTABLISHMENT OF DOMESTIC TRAFFICKING VICTIMS' FUND.—There is established in the Treasury of the United States a fund, to be known as the ‘Domestic Trafficking Victims' Fund’ (referred to in this section as the ‘Fund’), to be administered by the Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

“(d) TRANSFERS.—In a manner consistent with section 3302(b) of title 31, there shall be transferred to the Fund from the General Fund of the Treasury an amount equal to the amount of the assessments collected under

this section, which shall remain available until expended.

“(e) USE OF FUNDS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—From amounts in the Fund, in addition to any other amounts available, and without further appropriation, the Attorney General, in coordination with the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall, for each of fiscal years 2016 through 2019, use amounts available in the Fund to award grants or enhance victims' programming under—

“(A) section 204 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 14044c);

“(B) subsections (b)(2) and (f) of section 107 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7105); and

“(C) section 214(b) of the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 13002(b)).

“(2) LIMITATION.—Except as provided in subsection (h)(2), none of the amounts in the Fund may be used to provide health care or medical items or services.

“(f) COLLECTION METHOD.—The amount assessed under subsection (a) shall, subject to subsection (b), be collected in the manner that fines are collected in criminal cases.

“(g) DURATION OF OBLIGATION.—Subject to section 3613(b), the obligation to pay an assessment imposed on or after the date of enactment of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 shall not cease until the assessment is paid in full.

“(h) HEALTH OR MEDICAL SERVICES.—

“(1) TRANSFER OF FUNDS.—From amounts appropriated under section 10503(b)(1)(E) of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 254b-2(b)(1)(E)), as amended by section 221 of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015, there shall be transferred to the Fund an amount equal to the amount transferred under subsection (d) for each fiscal year, except that the amount transferred under this paragraph shall not be less than \$5,000,000 or more than \$30,000,000 in each such fiscal year, and such amounts shall remain available until expended.

“(2) USE OF FUNDS.—The Attorney General, in coordination with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, shall use amounts transferred to the Fund under paragraph (1) to award grants that may be used for the provision of health care or medical items or services to victims of trafficking under—

“(A) sections 202, 203, and 204 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 14044a, 14044b, and 14044c);

“(B) subsections (b)(2) and (f) of section 107 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7105); and

“(C) section 214(b) of the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 13002(b)).

“(3) GRANTS.—Of the amounts in the Fund used under paragraph (1), not less than \$2,000,000, if such amounts are available in the Fund during the relevant fiscal year, shall be used for grants to provide services for child pornography victims under section 214(b) of the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 13002(b)).

“(4) APPLICATION OF PROVISION.—The application of the provisions of section 221(c) of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 shall continue to apply to the amounts transferred pursuant to paragraph (1).”

(b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 201 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3013 the following:

“3014. Additional special assessment.”

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I will be back to speak further on the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, but for

now I yield to my friend and colleague, the chairman of the Finance Committee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). Under the previous order, there will be 1 hour of debate equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. I thank both of my colleagues who have spoken this morning, Senators MCCONNELL and CORNYN.

TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I wish to take a few minutes this morning to talk once again about Congress's role in advancing our Nation's trade policy. While I know trade policy can be a very contentious topic here in Congress, there are two simple facts that are beyond dispute: No. 1, more than 96 percent of the world's consumers live outside of the United States, and No. 2, in order to be competitive, American businesses need to be able to sell more American-made products and services to those overseas customers. In order to do that, we need to tear down barriers to American exports. At the same time, we should lay down enforceable rules for our trading partners so that we can be sure American workers and job creators are competing on a level playing field.

In order to accomplish these goals and to advance our Nation's interests in the global marketplace, Congress and the administration need to work together. Most people acknowledge this reality. Yet, there are differing views as to what mechanisms should be in place to facilitate cooperation between these two branches of government. In the end, there is only one legislative tool with a proven track record, and that is trade promotion authority, otherwise known as TPA.

For decades—going back as far as FDR—TPA has been a cornerstone of U.S. trade policy. TPA is a compact between the Senate, the House, and the administration. Under this compact, the administration agrees to pursue objectives specified by Congress and to consult with Congress as it negotiates trade agreements. In turn, both the House and the Senate agree to allow for expedited consideration of trade agreements without amendments.

For a number of reasons, this compact is essential for conclusion and passage of strong trade agreements. Put simply, without TPA, our trading partners will not put their best offers on the table because they will have no guarantee that the agreement they reach will be the one Congress actually votes on in the end.

The most recent version of TPA expired 8 years ago. While trade negotiations have continued since that time, without TPA in place, our negotiators have effectively been negotiating with one arm tied behind their backs. We need to renew TPA sooner rather than later in order to give these negotiators the tools they need to reach the best deals possible.

The stakes are very high. Currently, the United States is in the midst of negotiating some of the most ambitious trade agreements in our Nation's history—most notably, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP. If we want those negotiations to succeed—and I would hope that for the good of our country most of us do want them to succeed—we need to renew TPA.

Last week, I was joined by my colleague Senator WYDEN and Chairman RYAN of the House Ways and Means Committee in introducing the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015. This legislation would renew TPA and promote the advancement of 21st-century trade policies. Later today—in just a little while, in fact—the Senate Finance Committee will be marking up this bill, as well as other important pieces of trade legislation.

It has taken a long time to get here. As you may recall, I, along with the two former chairmen, Senator Baucus and Congressman Camp, introduced a bill to renew TPA early last year. That bill had bipartisan support in Congress and was broadly endorsed by the business community. It also had the support of officials in the Obama administration.

When Republicans took control of the Senate this year and I became the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, I made renewing TPA my top trade priority for this Congress and set out to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. This legislation we will be marking up today is the result of that hard work, and I am grateful to my colleagues for working with me to get us this far.

Of course, the effort to renew TPA really began a long time before we introduced our bill last year. Indeed, the discussion and debate over a new and improved TPA began even before the last iteration expired in 2007. We have been talking about this for a long time. Now is the time to act.

Over the past few weeks, as we have been preparing to move our legislation forward, some people—including some of my colleagues—have expressed concerns about TPA and trade agreements in general. So I wish to take a few minutes this morning to address some of the specific issues that have been raised.

Constitutional and sovereignty concerns. Some have argued that TPA cedes too much power to the administration and undermines Congress's constitutional authority to make laws.

I know the people have heard the President claiming that TPP—the Trans-Pacific Partnership—will be “the most progressive trade agreement in history,” and they have heard him brag about the labor and environmental standards the administration is shooting for with the agreement. The question inevitably becomes, will President Obama try to use this or other trade agreements to try to advance unilateral changes in U.S. law

and policy? Even though we all know that no trade agreement can go into force without Congress's approval, given this administration's track record on executive overreach, people are right to be concerned about these issues.

Fortunately, our TPA bill addresses these uncertainties. Rather than ceding authority to the executive branch, our bill empowers Congress at every step, from trade negotiations to final approval of the agreement itself.

Our bill makes clear what objectives a trade agreement must reach in order to be approved by Congress. In fact, the bill contains the clearest articulation of trade priorities in our Nation's history. It includes nearly 150 ambitious, high-standard negotiating objectives, including strong rules for intellectual property rights and agricultural trade, as well as protections for U.S. investment.

In addition to setting negotiating objectives, our legislation constrains the administration in a number of ways. For example, it ensures that implementing bills for trade agreements will include—and I am quoting the text of the bill—“only such provisions as are strictly necessary or appropriate to implement” trade agreements.

Additionally, it makes clear that any commitments made by the administration that are not disclosed to Congress before an implementing bill is introduced are not to be considered part of the relevant agreement and will have no force of law.

Our legislation clarifies that trade agreements must be concluded within the TPA timeframe and that any substantial modifications or additions made after that time will not be eligible for approval under TPA procedures.

So while I understand and even sympathize with those who might be suspicious of this administration and its tendency to push the boundaries of its constitutional authority, our TPA bill speaks to these exact concerns.

Furthermore, for those who might be worried that trade agreements could we used to harm U.S. sovereignty, our bill addresses those issues as well.

First, the bill makes clear that any provision of a trade agreement that is inconsistent with Federal or State law will have no effect.

Second, it states specifically that Federal and State laws will prevail in the event of a conflict with the trade agreement.

Third, it affirms that no trade agreement can prevent Congress or the States from changing their laws in the future.

Fourth, it confirms that the administration cannot unilaterally change U.S. law.

As you can see, far from abdicating Congress's power from U.S. trade policy, our TPA bill enhances the role of Congress when it comes to trade agreements.

Immigration. In addition to general concerns about constitutional powers

and U.S. sovereignty, I have heard some express specific concerns that President Obama can use the Trans-Pacific Partnership to enact changes to our immigration laws and that TPA will somehow empower him to do so. These concerns are unfounded for at least two reasons.

First, immigration is completely irrelevant to the objectives of the TPP agreement and administration officials have been clear and unequivocal that no immigration provisions are under negotiation.

Just last week, USTR Michael Froman testified before the Senate Committee on Finance and said:

I can assure you that we are not negotiating anything in TPP that would require any modifications of the U.S. immigration laws or system, any changes to our existing visa system. And, in fact, TPP will explicitly state that it will not require changes in any party's immigration laws or procedures.

Second, even if people don't trust this administration, particularly when it comes to immigration, the provisions of our TPA bill, the ones I just got through talking about, provide greater congressional oversight and authority over trade agreements and prevent this or any future administration from misleading Congress about what is included in any trade agreement.

In other words, if anyone is worried that despite their clear statements to the contrary, the administration will use TPP to advance its immigration agenda, they should support our TPA bill.

Transparency. Another concern I have heard from people both in and out of government is that trade agreements currently under discussion have been negotiated behind closed doors and that by renewing TPA, Congress would be enabling this type of secrecy.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the opposite is true. Our TPA bill goes further than any previous version of TPA to promote transparency both for Members of Congress and the American people.

Under our legislation, any Member of Congress who wants access to the negotiating text will get it, and at any time during the negotiations, Members of Congress will be able to request and receive a briefing from USTR on the status of negotiations.

In addition, the bill will require the administration to publicly release the full text of an agreement at least 60 days before they sign it, giving the American people full access and knowledge of all trade agreements before they are signed and well before they are submitted to Congress for their approval.

In short, any Member of Congress who is concerned about a lack of transparency in trade negotiations should be a cosponsor of the Hatch-Wyden-Ryan TPA bill.

Currency. The last concern I will talk about today deals with currency manipulation. Specifically, I have heard from colleagues that our TPA

bill should include stronger, enforceable standards to prevent our trading partners from engaging in currency manipulation.

Now, make no mistake, I think currency manipulation is a serious issue. Like my colleagues, I am worried the currency policies of a number of countries, including some of our trade partners, continue to have negative consequences on U.S. businesses and workers. I believe Congress should carefully consider ways to address this issue. That is why, for the first time, our TPA bill includes a negotiating objective intended to address currency manipulation.

While I understand some of my colleagues would like that provision to be stronger, this is a very complex issue. Many have expressed valid concerns that by requiring our trade agreements to contain enforceable currency provisions we would be inviting a number of unintended consequences, including challenges to U.S. monetary policy. In addition, most have acknowledged that such provisions would effectively derail the TPP negotiations, harming our farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, and others who so desperately need access to these markets.

It is not just me saying this. Yesterday, I received a letter from Treasury Secretary Lew expressing these very concerns about the possibility of including enhanced currency provisions in TPA. On top of that, 10 former Treasury Secretaries, from both Republican and Democratic administrations, sent a letter to congressional leaders that made similar arguments.

As you can see, there is more than ample reason to doubt the wisdom of inserting stronger currency provisions into TPA. I think it is fair, given Secretary Lew's very clear statements, to assume that President Obama would not sign a TPA bill that included such provisions, and I think it is more than fair to say that even if he would sign such a bill, it would be devastating to our ongoing trade negotiations; thereby, threatening growth and jobs right here at home. That being the case, I hope my colleagues pursuing this route will reconsider their positions.

Once again, we are going to mark up our TPA bill later today. I am excited and pleased for this opportunity. I think we will get a strong bipartisan vote to report the bill and send it to the floor. We have crafted a very good bill, one that I think Members of both parties can support. I know some Members have anxieties and concerns about these issues. We have put the bill together with those types of concerns in mind and, as I think I have demonstrated today, anyone who is truly supportive of trade and of opening foreign markets to U.S. goods and services and wants to create more good jobs right here at home should support our bill.

Since the day we introduced our legislation, letters and statements of support have been pouring in. I will mention just a few.

We have had statements from administration officials, including the President himself, and to say support from the business community has been overwhelming would be a gross understatement. We have letters from virtually every industry—farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, tech companies, health care companies, and I could literally go on and on, but I will not, at least not right now. Instead, today, I will just mention two of the many letters of support we have received from businesses and job creators.

I have a letter from the Trade Benefits America Coalition signed by hundreds of companies and major trade associations expressing their strong support for the Hatch-Wyden-Ryan TPA bill.

I have another letter signed by nearly 300 State and local chambers of commerce, farm bureaus, and manufacturing associations, all expressing their support for the swift renewal of TPA.

Leaders from a number of leading conservative organizations have expressed support as well, including the Conservative Reform Network, the Cato Institute, Americans for Tax Reform, American Enterprise Institute, American Action Forum, Tea Party Express, 60 Plus, American Commitment, American Conservative Union, Americans for Job Security, Center for Individual Freedom, Citizens for Limited Taxation, Competitive Enterprise Institute, Conservative Reform Network, Council for Citizens Against Government Waste, Crossroads GPS, Digital Liberty, Ending Spending, Frontiers of Freedom, Georgia Center Right Coalition, Institute for Liberty, Minnesota Center Right Coalition, National Taxpayers Union, R Street, Rio Grande Foundation, Taxpayer Foundation Alliance, and the Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy.

That is a long list and by no means contains everybody who is for this bill, and it is growing every day. As you can see, TPA is supported across the ideological spectrum.

I suppose this is the best way I can put it: Senator TED CRUZ coauthored an op-ed with Senator Ryan in support of our bill in today's Wall Street Journal. If both TED CRUZ and Barack Obama support our legislation, it is probably safe to say we are onto something.

I appreciate all the support we have received thus far for our TPA bill. It has been gratifying to see, and I look forward to talking more with colleagues about these issues in the coming week.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time during quorum calls before the votes this morning be equally divided.

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

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE NEW CONGRESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, it is over 100 days since the 114th Congress has been in session led by a new majority following the November election. This Chamber can point to significant accomplishments in this short period of time.

Now, none of us is spiking the football or saying that we have done miraculous things, but it is undeniable that we have made discernible, concrete progress on important matters that affect the lives and the quality of life of the American people.

In only 3 weeks into the new Congress, the Senate already had more votes on amendments than the Chamber did in all of last year. What that means is that, on a bipartisan basis, Senators have been able to contribute their ideas on legislation—how to improve it and get votes on it. That was something we promised voters that would change after the last election. In the new Congress and under the new majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, we have delivered.

Just a few weeks ago, the Senate passed a budget that actually balances in 10 years—something the Chamber has done only once since 2009. More recently, we sent to the President's desk the so-called doc fix, which, more importantly, ensured access to the doctors and hospitals that our seniors need. We also made great strides in providing the American people a final say on the Iran nuclear deal that is being negotiated now by the President's representatives. We have made progress on bipartisan legislation that ensures the United States will get the best deal with our trading partners in pending negotiations—opening up American goods and services to global markets, which is good for our economy. It is good for jobs, and it is good for better wages for hard-working American families.

But I must say, even with all of these accomplishments, I am most proud of the deal we were able to reach this week concerning the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act.

I have noticed one thing since I have been here in Washington; it is that the rich and powerful seem to do pretty well. They are well represented on K Street, and they are not hesitant about letting their needs be known. But one

indicator of the character of a nation is how that nation—our Nation—treats those who are the most vulnerable in our society, those who actually need our help, who do not have lobbyists or other people working on their behalf in the halls of Congress.

So this legislation, I think, actually is a very positive step because it demonstrates that we have not fallen deaf to the cries of those who actually need our help—the victims of human trafficking.

This legislation will be instrumental in helping victims of sexual abuse and trafficking recover from a life in bondage, and it will provide stronger tools for law enforcement officials to track down and punish those who want to keep them in the shadows, who want to continue to make profit from the pain, the anguish, and the involuntary servitude of typically young women between the ages of 12 and 14. And often these young women—these children—are treated as criminals and not as the victims they truly are. With the passage of this bill, we are one step closer to reining it in.

So I thank our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, some of whom are here in the Chamber, for working with us in the spirit of trying to accomplish something important and actually getting it done. I know the distinguished ranking member on the Judiciary Committee, with whom I partnered on a number of important topics, is here, and I thank him for his contribution. And the Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY, has been very important in the negotiation and in getting us to yes.

Finally—and I know time is short, so I will have more to say on this later. But there are literally 200 outside groups—faith-based groups, law enforcement organizations, and other organizations—that worked on the sidelines cheering us, asking us to get this done—groups such as Rights4Girls, Shared Hope International, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, the End Child Prostitution and Trafficking organization, and the National Association to Protect Children. These groups and hundreds of others across the country have literally been our boots on the ground.

I also think it is important to recognize organizations such as Google Ideas and the McCain Institute, particularly Cindy McCain, who joined me in Houston recently to talk more about this important topic.

So there are a lot of people who contributed to get us to where we are today. We are not done yet. We have some important votes in just a few minutes—a total of 8 votes today—before we complete our work on this legislation, but I think this is a good day. This will be a good day for the Senate and for the victims of human trafficking.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

AMENDMENT NO. 301

(Purpose: To improve the bill)

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up my amendment No. 301.

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

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Vermont [Mr. LEAHY] proposes an amendment numbered 301.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The amendment is printed in the RECORD of March 16, 2015, under “Text of Amendments.”)

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I appreciate what the Senator from Texas has said. We have worked together. I hope we continue to do this, but before I talk about my substitute, I want to yield the floor to the distinguished Senator from Washington State.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, so many Members helped us get this bill back on a bipartisan path, but I want to thank Senators REID, CORNYN, KLOBUCHAR, FEINSTEIN, MIKULSKI, and LEAHY in particular for their work. I also want to thank all of the staff who have worked extremely hard to get this done, especially Melanie Rainer from my staff.

From the beginning of this debate, Democrats have been very clear that this bill to help survivors should focus squarely on that goal alone. We also felt this conversation was no place for a debate about restrictions on women’s health access. While there are clear differences between the two parties when it comes to women’s health, I know Senator CORNYN and many others agreed with us that an effort to fight back against human trafficking in our country is, without question, no place for gridlock and dysfunction. It should not have taken this long, but I am very pleased that we were able to work together, find common ground, and reach an agreement.

This agreement isn’t perfect. No comprise ever is, and I am sure my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would say the same thing. I believe there is much more we can and must do to protect and strengthen women’s access to comprehensive, high-quality health care.

In the 21st century, there is no reason a woman should be prevented from exercising her constitutionally guaranteed right to make her own choices about her own body. That is something I could not feel more strongly about, and I am going to keep working to not only protect that right but expand and improve access to care for women across the country.

I am very glad, however, that the amendment we are proposing this

morning would provide survivors now with real, dedicated funds and support, including important health services. Critically, this amendment would take away the expansion of restrictions on women’s health that would have occurred under the original legislation. It would ensure that the Hyde language is now not expanded to any new programs under this bill.

I hope my colleagues will join us in supporting this amendment so we can pass this bill to help trafficking survivors, and then move as quickly as possible to confirm our highly qualified nominee for Attorney General.

I thank my colleagues again for their work to reach this compromise. The families and communities we serve rightly expect us to work together to solve problems and not let gridlock and dysfunction get in the way of results. I am very pleased we were able to find that common ground and a path forward for this important legislation. I am very hopeful that now we will be able to continue working together to tackle the many other challenges our country faces.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, my substitute amendment, No. 301, brings together three very important bills that provide a comprehensive approach to preventing human trafficking and help survivors rebuild their lives. First, it includes the Leahy-Collins-Murkowski-Ayotte amendment to protect runaway and homeless youth from trafficking. Second, it includes the Klobuchar-Cornyn bill as reported in February by the Judiciary Committee. The safe harbor bill encourages States to treat victims of trafficking as victims and not—as oftentimes they are treated—as criminals. Finally, it includes the Cornyn-Klobuchar bill, S. 178, but without the divisive language that limits victims’ services, which has held us up so long.

My amendment came about as a response to the request of survivors and the dedicated people who work with them, the people who actually see this day-by-day, for whom it is not a theoretical thing, but is an actual day-by-day crisis. They have urged us to remove the unnecessary and harmful provision which stalled this bill for weeks.

Congress has a long history of passing legislation to address human trafficking. We did so in the Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, which included the reauthorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. We consistently have addressed human trafficking legislation without abortion politics being inserted in the discussion. My amendment would return us to the path of the bipartisan bills we passed in years past. Importantly, my amendment is going to make sure we are preventing human trafficking in the first place.

It is one thing to work with children after they become victims. I think we would all agree it is better if we can

help prevent them from becoming victims. The best way to do that is to support runaway and homeless kids. Without a safe place to sleep, these children and teens are exceptionally vulnerable to human traffickers. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, first passed in 1974, funds tried-and-true programs to help these youth stabilize their lives. When a homeless or runaway teen is looking for a place to stay and there is nothing available, they sometimes resort to desperate measures. They are picked up almost at once by sex traffickers and exploited.

The substitute amendment reauthorizes and strengthens the programs that have worked ever since 1974. It adds training for service providers so we can better identify victims of trafficking and refer them to the appropriate resources. It includes language to prevent discrimination against homeless youth based on their sexual orientation or gender identification.

We found, in the testimony before the Judiciary Committee, a growing number of homeless and runaway youth identify as LGBT. Many of them have actually been thrown out of their homes for who they are. I am a parent; I am a grandparent. I find this heartbreaking to me that any child, any child for whatever reason would be thrown out of their home. We have to ensure that these vulnerable children who have already been rejected do not face rejection again because of how they look or dress or whom they love.

I urge all Senators to support this amendment. This is a moral issue. If we are serious about listening to survivors and responding to their needs and if we are serious about preventing human trafficking and protecting vulnerable children in the first place, this amendment is the strongest option before us.

We should be judged by what we do for the most vulnerable among us. The combination of these three bills should bring us together. I urge the Senate to support this comprehensive substitute.

Several of us in this body, both parties, have had the privilege to serve law enforcement before coming here, as I did. I said many times on this floor that I still have nightmares today, 40 years later, from some of the scenes I saw back then. I could arrest and prosecute these people who harm these youth, but we could never give back to the youth who they were before they were harmed.

Unfortunately, what I have nightmares about happens in so many more places. In the distinguished Presiding Officer's own home State, as well as the home States of every single Member of this body, it is happening today. These are the most vulnerable of our citizens. We as Senators should help protect them.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE ON FINANCE TO MEET

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Com-

mittee on Finance be allowed to meet during today's session of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SANDERS. I object to the unanimous consent request to waive rule XXVI to allow the Finance Committee to pass a fast-track bill that will undermine the American worker.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, let me say to my good friend from Vermont, the Finance Committee is scheduled to deal with the trade promotion authority issue this afternoon. There are over 200 amendments. I would say to my friend, all this objection is going to do will be to require us to recess after the votes on trafficking and stay in session because we are going to finish the bill in the Finance Committee today. I appreciate the Senator's opposition, but I want to make clear to him and to our colleagues that it will not prevent the trade promotion authority bill from being dealt with in Finance today. We will simply go into recess after we finish the trafficking bill and stay in recess, and the committee will work until it reports out the bill.

I understand the Senator's vigorous opposition to it. The Senator has made that quite clear. It is certainly understandable. The Senator has a right to do that. I am just making the point that this particular way to oppose it will not be successful today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, let me say to my friend, the majority leader, I appreciate his position. But as he knows, not only is there massive opposition to this TPP agreement, but there is a lot of concern that the American people have not been involved in the process, that there is not a lot of transparency. What we are trying to do is to make sure this debate takes place out in the public, that the American people have as much time as possible to understand the very significant implications of this trade agreement. I, and I suspect others, will do our best to make that happen.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand the position of my friend from Vermont on this. This Finance Committee meeting obviously will be open to the public. There will be many amendments offered, most of them I expect reflecting the views of the Senator from Vermont, but the meeting will go forward. The committee will simply be inconvenienced by the current actions of the Senator from Vermont, but the committee will go forward. The Senate will be in recess, and the committee will meet at the earliest possible time and finish the bill today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 30 seconds to speak before the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I want to make clear that the first amendment we will vote on relative to the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act will remove the Hyde amendment which is the longstanding, 39-year consensus that taxpayer funds will not be used to fund abortions. This amendment would completely strip that Hyde amendment, and it would undermine the delicate compromise that has been reached on the important legislation. The next vote we will have will be on that compromise piece of legislation, the Cornyn-Murray-Klobuchar legislation. It would literally cut funding for human trafficking victims as compared to this compromise.

I would urge our colleagues to stick with the bipartisan compromise and to vote against the Leahy amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

FRANK R. LAUTENBERG SAFER CHEMICALS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I rise on Earth Day to speak about our children and about chemical safety. We come in contact with thousands of chemicals every day. As I am speaking now, millions of our fellow citizens are buying groceries or going to the hardware store or getting clothes or toys for their children. They assume the government has studied the chemicals in these products and determined they are safe. But that is not the case.

The Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, or TSCA, is supposed to protect American families, and it doesn't. There are over 84,000 known chemicals in manufactured and commercial products, and hundreds of new ones come on the market every year. How many of those products have been regulated by the EPA? Less than half a dozen.

These are troubling numbers. TSCA has been in existence for almost 40 years, and out of 84,000 chemicals—and counting—less than a dozen are actually regulated. The EPA cannot even regulate asbestos, a known carcinogen. Since losing a court battle in 1991, they have not been able to regulate it. The risks and dangers have been around for decades, but there is no cop on the beat. TSCA has failed.

Some States are trying to fill the gap by regulating a few chemicals, but my home State of New Mexico, and the vast majority of others, have no ability to test chemicals. They don't have a department to write regulations. Without a working Federal law, they have no protection. Even California, which probably has the greatest capacity of all States to test and regulate, has only proposed rules for three chemicals. In 7 years, since California passed a law to regulate chemicals, it has only begun the process on three chemicals.

That is why I and others have worked so hard to find compromise on this issue. That is why I introduced the

Frank R. Lautenberg Safer Chemicals for the 21st Century Act.

I come to the floor today on Earth Day to urge all of my colleagues here to make reforming our broken chemical safety law a priority. We have a moral obligation to protect our kids from dangerous chemicals.

I have been privileged to work with Senator VITTER on this bill. I thank him and our colleagues who have worked with us. This is a true bipartisan effort. We don't always agree on some of the issues, but we have one basic goal here. Reform is overdue. It is 40 years overdue.

All of our landmark environmental laws have been reformed or amended—the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Clean Air Act—but not the Toxic Substances Control Act. It should have been—and it was not for lack of trying.

Our esteemed former colleague, the late Senator Frank Lautenberg led the way for many years, with great determination.

He never gave up. Together we fought the good fight to pass our dream bill, but were never able to make any progress. And he realized we needed to work with all stakeholders. Everyone at the table, including industry. Because he understood, this is not about getting all that we want. This is about getting the American people the protections they need. His effort to reform TSCA was the last major legislation he introduced.

Mr. President, 2 years ago, the New York Times endorsed the Lautenberg-Vitter bill. The Times said—correctly—that previous efforts at reform had gone nowhere, and the bill “deserves to be passed because it would be a significant advance over the current law.”

That was 2 years ago. I was honored to take over as the lead Democrat on the bill. Since then, I have listened to concerns. I reached across the aisle. I brought everyone into the room, or at least tried to. With my Republican colleague, Senator VITTER, we have improved the bill.

I want to talk for a moment about what this bill actually does, and how it moves us forward. Specifically, it does the following:

First, the manufacture of a new chemical cannot begin until EPA approves it. Currently, a new chemical is on the market after 90 days, unless EPA finds unreasonable risk. Our bill gives EPA the time it needs, and keeps these chemicals out of American homes in the meantime.

Second, current TSCA has no requirement for evaluating existing chemicals. None. Our bill does and includes deadlines, even more aggressive than the EPA itself asked for.

Third, we require a stronger safety standard for all chemicals to be evaluated. No longer will EPA be required to choose the “least burdensome” regulation. Its criteria will be safety, science, and public health—never cost or convenience.

Fourth, our bill defines, for the first time, our most vulnerable populations—pregnant women, infants, the elderly, and workers—and explicitly requires that EPA ensure they are protected from chemicals in commerce or manufacturing.

Finally, we limit confidential business information protection for industry. Currently, it is limitless, unless challenged by EPA. We call for a 10-year sunset on confidential business information claims.

Reform takes time. But, it should not take decades. We can't afford to wait any longer. Our children and our communities can't afford to wait for protection from chemicals. Yes, that means compromise. The goal was not a perfect bill. The goal was, and is, real reform.

We have worked to address the issues with the original bill, and we still have work to do. It doesn't do everything I want. Senator VITTER has given a great deal as well. But this is a strong, bipartisan bill. I am confident it can pass the Senate. It will ensure EPA has the authority to keep us safe, something EPA cannot do now.

So, let's be clear. We have a choice. We can continue with a law that has failed. We can continue to leave the American people unprotected. Or we can actually make a difference. We can give the EPA the power it needs to do its job—so that chemicals are tested—so that our homes and workplaces are safe—and so that American families are protected.

I believe the choice is obvious. To those who disagree, I would ask a simple question. Are you willing to live with a failed law another 20 or 40 years? Because we all agree on one thing—TSCA is a failure.

This is the best chance we have, possibly for many years, to pass a law that will protect our kids from dangerous chemicals.

Our bill will make Americans safer. Not just Americans fortunate to live in States with protections. All Americans. No matter where they live.

For those Americans in States with existing safeguards, that won't change. Those safeguards will stay in place. Any regulations in place as of January of this year will remain. And there is a role for States to play—to help with the thousands of chemicals that EPA will not be able to evaluate.

But, let's be clear. The EPA has the largest staff on chemical safety of any country in the world. They should be able to put that staff to good use. To do otherwise is wasted opportunity and continued failure.

This has not been an easy process. But, it is a necessary one. I believe it will result in a good bill. We welcome a healthy debate. We welcome constructive amendments. At the same time, we should not lose sight of the key goal—to actually pass a bill. To reform a law that is not working. To protect our families and communities.

I believe we can do this. And Senator Lautenberg, who was a great environ-

mental champion, he believed we could as well.

Americans trust that when they go to the grocery store, or when they are in their own homes, that the products they reach for are safe. The current system fails that trust. It fails to provide confidence in our regulatory system. And it fails to provide confidence in our consumer products. We cannot let that failure continue. It hurts our economy, and it hurts the American people.

We need solutions, not roadblocks and closed doors. Senator VITTER and I will continue to work with all stakeholders. If we can make this bill better, we will. We all share that goal. But, here's the bottom line: We must work through the remaining challenges. Now is not the time for digging in our heels—and going nowhere. Mr. President, 40 years of that is enough. Now is the time for change.

There is only one essential question before us. Is this reform better than what we have? The answer is yes. Can we make it even better? I hope the answer to that question is yes as well. But, that will require a spirit of cooperation and compromise. That will require that we continue to have everyone at the table.

Critics charge that this is an alliance with the chemical industry. That is false. It is an alliance with the American people. They put their trust in the American government to protect them. That trust has not been met.

It is in everyone's interest—to identify dangerous chemicals, to protect the American public, and restore confidence in the safety of the products made by American companies.

We have a historic opportunity to create a chemical law that works and provide American families with the protections they expect and deserve. Let's work together. Let's make that happen. Let's not wait another 40 years.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

MEDICARE INDEPENDENCE AT HOME MEDICAL PRACTICE DEMONSTRATION IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2015

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Finance Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 971, and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 971) to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for an increase in the limit on the length of an agreement under the Medicare independence at home medical practice demonstration program.

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