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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable GEORGE ALLEN, a Senator from the State of Virginia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Father Paul Lavin, of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Washington, DC.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

In the book of the prophet Amos, the Lord tells us:

I hate and despise your feasts,
I want none of your burnt offerings.
Let me have no more of the din of your chanting,
No more of your strumming on harps.
But let justice flow like water,
And integrity like an unfailing stream.

Let us pray.

Lord God, we praise You and bless You for the many gifts You have given to the United States, and for the gifts You have given to the men and women who serve in the Senate. Let our feasts be to come to the aid of the poor and the oppressed. Let our song be to practice justice, and let our sacrifice be the offering of a humble and contrite heart. Then, when our lips sing Your praise, You will listen to our song. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable GEORGE ALLEN led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. THURMOND).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 25, 2001.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable GEORGE ALLEN, a Senator from the State of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

STROM THURMOND,
President pro tempore.

Mr. ALLEN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for not to exceed 10 minutes.

Under the previous order, there will now be 30 minutes under the control of the Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN, or his designee.

The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair.

STEEL REVITALIZATION ACT

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of the Steel Revitalization Act of 2001. This is the companion measure to H.R. 808 which, as of this moment, has 189 cosponsors in the House of Representatives. The measure represents a comprehensive approach to a serious crisis which is facing our domestic iron ore and steel industry.

Several of the provisions contained in this act are ones that my colleagues in the bipartisan Steel Caucus have in-

troduced in the Senate. I particularly thank Senators ROCKEFELLER and SPECTER for their work in cochairing this caucus, and Senator BYRD for his unflinching support of the entire steel industry and his creative efforts on behalf of the industry's working families. A special thank you to Senator ROCKEFELLER, who has been absolutely the leader on this issue.

The Steel Revitalization Act includes the following components:

First, there is import relief. We go back to a 5-year period of quantitative restrictions on the import of iron ore. We go back prior to the import surge in 1997. We go to a 3-year average. That is where we hold the line. Between February and March, 2001, there was a 40-percent surge in the import of steel or semifinished steel, way under the cost of production, constituting unfair trade and putting people out of work.

Second, there is creation of a steelworker retiree health care fund which is administered by the steelworker retiree health care board at the Department of Labor. This fund would be underwritten through a 1.5-percent surcharge on the sale of all steel products in the United States, both imported and domestic.

One of the awful things about what is going on is many of the retirees worked their whole life, thought they had health care coverage, and are terrified they will not have the health care coverage. A 70-year-old struggling with cancer now is worried there will be no health care coverage.

Third, we have the enhancement of the current Steel Loan Guarantee Program which provides the steel companies greater access to funds needed to invest in capital improvements to take advantage of the latest technological advancements.

Finally, we have the creation of a \$500 million grant program at the Department of Commerce to help defray the costs of environmental mitigation and the restructuring as a result of

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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consolidation—again, assuming these companies make a commitment to invest in our country; again, assuming these companies make a commitment to the workers.

I think all Senators can appreciate this legislation. The Iron Range of Minnesota, and if you think of our sister State of Michigan, this is a part of the United States of America with a proud history of providing key raw materials to the producers of steel for well over a century. In these taconite mines are some of the hardest working people you ever want to meet. LTV has closed down in Hoyt Lakes; 1,400 miners lost their work. They are steelworkers, but they work in the mines. These were good, middle-class jobs. It is not just these workers who have lost their jobs; it has the ripple effect on all the small businesses, all the subcontractors, all the suppliers—all the families.

I am in schools all the time. There is such pain, such concern about the future of these families and concern for the future of their children. From my point of view, and I know I speak for Senator DAYTON, there is probably not a more important piece of legislation to introduce.

The introduction of a piece of legislation is not symbolic politics. It does not mean it passes. We have a lot of work cut out for us, but I will say to my colleague from Virginia, I thank publicly on the floor of the Senate—I certainly have called her—Secretary of Labor Chao. We are, again, in a situation right now where there is a lot of economic pain, a lot of economic desperation. The Secretary of Labor has provided the workers up there with at least some relief, which was extremely important. We were so hopeful we could get trade adjustment assistance benefits. The Secretary of Labor granted us an additional year, above and beyond unemployment benefits that workers receive through the State of Minnesota.

It is additional money for job relocation. For workers and their families to get that trade adjustment assistance is a lifeline. It gives them more time. It gives them an opportunity to think about what ladder there is for career development. It gives them some financial assistance for their families. I have told Secretary Chao—I don't know if I will get her in trouble with the administration by being so glowing about what I have to say about her—I so appreciate it and so do the people in the State of Minnesota. I want to publicly thank her.

I also want to say we are now waiting, of course, for the administration on a decision—Secretary Evans will make a decision soon—as to whether or not we will be taking some trade action to really make sure we have a future for this industry. The next big decision is going to be in mid-June about whether or not the taconite workers on the Iron Range in Minnesota are going to have a future. This industry will not survive if it is continually faced with

unfair trade practices, if it continues to face this import surge of slab or finished steel. Our taconite workers on the Iron Range of Minnesota ask nothing more than to have a level playing field. We wait for a decision mid-June.

I think steelworkers and industrial workers all across the country—and I think they will have a lot of allies—will in a strong voice say you have to take some action. For the Iron Range in Minnesota, northeast Minnesota, time is not neutral. Time moves on. It is extremely important, above and beyond this lifeline assistance, that we get serious about a fair trade policy so these workers and their families have a future.

There is companion legislation in the House. Very important work has been done by Senator ROCKEFELLER and Senator SPECTER. I think we can get some strong bipartisan support, but it is not going to be enough to just introduce a bill. We will need action from the administration and we will need legislative action if there is to be a future for this extremely important industry—which, by the way, I think is essential to our national security.

This legislation is legislation near and dear to my heart because it is so connected to the lives and people I truly love, that is to say the steelworkers and their families on the Iron Range of the State of Minnesota.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will please call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. I ask consent to speak in morning business for 15 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

OUR TRADE DEFICIT

Mr. DORGAN. I want to speak this morning about international trade and our growing and troubling trade deficit. In March, the merchandise trade deficit surprised economists, jumping to \$37.6 billion in that month alone. That is the latest month for which we have data. In March imports into this country increased to \$101 billion, while American exports decreased to \$64 billion.

This is a very serious problem. The trade deficit continues to balloon. We had a \$450 billion merchandise trade deficit last year and it continues to grow and grow. It increases our indebtedness in this country. Unlike a budget deficit, about which economists over strong coffee can make the point that we owe to ourselves, you cannot make the point that our trade deficit is owed to ourselves. It is owed to others out-

side this country and will be and must be repaid one day with a lower cost of living in this country. We must get a handle on this exploding trade deficit.

Let me speak to one portion of the trade issue. We are about to see the administration take a step that I vigorously oppose. I am going to offer a piece of legislation today on behalf of myself and my colleague from Nevada, Senator REID, that deals with the issue of Mexican trucks entering this country under the provisions of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement.

What is the issue? We signed a free trade pact with the country of Mexico. It has not turned out very well, as a matter of fact. We had a trade surplus with Mexico when we signed the trade pact. Now we have a \$24 billion trade deficit with Mexico. So we went from a surplus to a very large and exploding deficit with Mexico.

But one aspect of the trade pact with Mexico is the question of movement of goods and individuals back and forth across the boarder and especially the question of Mexican trucks coming into this country. President Clinton, I believe in violation of NAFTA, prescribed a 20-mile zone in which Mexican trucks could haul goods into this country for trade purposes. But they could not go beyond that zone. This administration is about to lift that and provide unrestricted access into this country for Mexican trucks. My legislation will say that is not possible, we will not allow that to happen until and unless the Administration implements certain safeguards to protect those who use America's highways.

Let me describe why this is important. Do you want to drive down a highway in this country and drive next to a Mexican truck that is pulling double the load we allow pulled in this country behind our trucks, driven by a driver who is making less than the minimum wage in this country—on average, incidentally, of \$7- to \$10-a-day salary for that Mexican truck driver; a truck that has not been inspected in most cases, if inspected, not inspected to the same standards to which we inspect trucks in this country?

This is a circumstance where the Mexican trucks are determined to be unsafe at the border crossings at which the trucks are inspected. In many cases, 40 percent are turned back because they are unsafe, do not meet standards. Is that what we want to have on American highways? I don't think so.

This is what has happened. Mexico threatened, under NAFTA, to sue the U.S. for billions of dollars per year in compensation if the U.S. did not lift this longstanding control on allowing Mexican commercial truckers to operate within the United States. President Bush has agreed to allow them to operate in the United States beyond the limit, even though the Department of Transportation says it cannot certify