

care of the farm bill. We have to appoint conferees on the budget. We also have to dispose of, because we have a statutory problem, the media cross-ownership issue. There are 10 hours of debate on that. I hope we can limit that significantly. Those are the items we need to complete this week—this week—and it is already Wednesday.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

COMMEMORATING 60 YEARS OF ISRAELI STATEHOOD

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, more than a hundred years ago, the Hungarian journalist Theodore Herzl set into motion a political movement that would change the world.

Herzl's vision for a Jewish homeland would not be realized in his own lifetime, but the nation that would become the modern State of Israel would have exceeded even his dreams of a prosperous home for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In the nearly 2,000 years that had passed since the exile, the Jewish people had remained faithful to their traditions, praying and hoping for their eventual return. That right was acknowledged in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and reaffirmed by the mandate of the League of Nations in 1922. The horrors of the Nazi Holocaust made Israel's establishment all the more urgent, and had created among the American people a deep sympathy for the aspirations of the Jewish people. At the stroke of midnight, on this day in 1948, the modern State of Israel was born, and just eleven minutes later, here in the U.S., President Truman recognized the new state, solidifying for all time the bond between our two countries.

A deep friendship between America and Israel is natural, given the many political and moral values we share. But our strong diplomatic ties were far from inevitable. Historians tell us that recognition was strenuously opposed by Secretary of State George Marshall, a foreign policy realist who valued strategic interests over humanitarian concerns. In this case, Marshall was overridden by his Commander in Chief, who, following the Holocaust, saw the moral and humanitarian imperative of the Jewish people having their own state. Despite President Truman's deep respect for Marshall, it was a decision that Truman would never regret.

The U.S. Congress, it should be noted, had spoken out on the issue long before recognition was sought. As far back as 1922, Congress expressed its sympathy for a sovereign homeland for the Jewish people. It would take two more decades for that state to come about, but when it did Congress and the American people were ready once again to express overwhelming support.

In the decades since the birth of the modern State of Israel, much has changed. This desert land has in many ways become "a land that floweth with milk and honey." In this, it reflects the ingenuity and the resourcefulness of the Israeli people.

Over time, the U.S.-Israeli relationship has only grown stronger. A bond that was originally based largely on moral grounds and shared values has been fortified by shared strategic interests.

While some Arab states recognize Israel, most do not. And Israel faces numerous threats, including an existential threat from Iran.

Yet on this day of celebration, it is my fervent hope that Israel will soon celebrate its birth as a state that is recognized by all its Arab neighbors, safe from the threat of terror. Until then, I know my colleagues and I will do everything in our power to ensure that the U.S.-Israeli relationship is robust, and that the Jewish state has all it needs to defend itself.

On this anniversary, we send our best wishes and every expression of heartfelt goodwill and congratulations to the Jewish people.

I yield the floor.

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, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business for up to 1 hour, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from Ohio.

COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, in a little more than 2 hours, I will join members of the United States and Colombian labor organizations at a news conference speaking out against human rights abuses in Colombia, speaking out against the pending free-trade agreement that would ignore those abuses and, in some sense, excuse them. Much of the talk about this agreement centers around the violence and impunity in Colombia, especially as it relates to trade unionists. And for good reason. International organizations, human rights and religious groups look at Colombia's record with alarm and urgency. Human rights defenders, trade unionists, community leaders, and religious leaders are today, in too many cases, receiving death threats from rearmend paramilitary groups such as the Black Ea-

gles and are reeling from a new wave of violence.

Before, during, and after a country-wide rally on March 6, 2008, against paramilitary and all forms of violence, at least two march organizers were killed. Union leaders Carlo Burbano and Carmen Cecilia Carvajal were killed for simply trying to voice their views. Three other social leaders were killed in events that also were associated with the march. March organizers all over the country received death threats. One organizer's house was attacked with gunfire on February 29. Those human rights issues are serious. Yet the administration takes them in stride, barely acknowledging the Colombian culture of violence and then impunity, in too many cases, for those who committed those violent acts.

In a short while, I will stand with nearly a dozen brave women and men who have come to Washington to give witness to the horrific danger they and their loved ones face every day. These brave men and women face threats to their jobs, their families, their homes, and their lives. They are under threat because they have taken a stand. They have fought for labor and human rights in Colombia.

One message I want them to take back to Colombia is that we are not taking lightly what is happening to them. The administration may be taking it lightly, but an awful lot of people in the House and Senate and an awful lot of Americans don't take this lightly. We will push the Bush administration to take a stand against the violence occurring in Colombia instead of glossing over it.

The President must not forsake our Nation's values, our profound respect for the rule of law, and our Nation's hard-won progress on behalf of labor and human rights and basic rights. Again, the President must not forsake our Nation's values and our profound respect for the rule of law or our hard-won progress to establish labor, human, and basic rights. The President must not forsake our values or dismiss the sacrifices of so many.

The Colombian Government has taken steps to strengthen legal institutions and processes—I acknowledge that—but the bottom line is the violence is not subsiding. Murders of labor leaders continued at a pace of one per week already this year.

Some newspapers have said the violence is down—and although it was down last year, now it is back up—and we should move on with this Colombia trade agreement because the violence is down. But when there is one labor activist killed every single week, it is hard to say that is an acceptable level. That is what people in the administration are saying. That is what some newspapers are saying, that that is an acceptable level of violence. No, we should not approve a trade agreement when that kind of violence is aimed at too many labor activists.

For the sake of both our nations, the United States should not sign a trade

deal with Colombia that shortchanges workers, that rewards polluters, that gives businesses the same power as sovereign governments. Later, I will talk more about a part of this trade agreement and how it does reward polluters and gives businesses the same power as sovereign governments. In many cases, corporations will be able to override the democratically attained rule of law, rules, and regulations. More on that later.

Back to the issue at hand with Colombia, we absolutely should not sign a trade deal that forgives treachery toward labor leaders, that says it is OK that these labor leaders are murdered. We in this body will fight alongside our Colombian labor friends for fair trade, and we will fight for their efforts to end the violence.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Montana.

FARM BILL

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise today not only as a U.S. Senator from Montana but also as a farmer who is actively engaged in agriculture, family farm agriculture. It truly is a family farm that we operate in north central Montana. Not only do my wife Sharla and I farm, but when we need help, my brother, my son-in-law, my son, and my daughter all step to the plate and help us.

We just finished spring planting in north central Montana, and with it comes hopes for a great year. We all know the commodity prices right now are very good, but the rest of the story is this: Diesel prices are double what they were last year. Chemical prices have gone through the roof. Fertilizer is becoming unaffordable because the cost is so high.

That is where the farm bill steps in—this farm bill which just came out of conference committee which we will vote on, hopefully, later today. In this farm bill, we raise the target price. We have a disaster program that Senator BAUCUS fought so hard to get into this bill so that farmers, when they do have a disaster, do not have to come back to Washington, DC, with hat in hand. They will have a safety net. We have country-of-origin labeling in this farm bill with some teeth in it that I hope the next administration takes by the horns and adopts so people know where their food comes from. It allows for the interstate shipment of meat so small meatpackers can ship their products across State lines, which has not been available before, to add value to meat products throughout this country. It has a nonfood biofuel section of which a part of that is a camelina pilot program, which I am very proud of, which offers farmers another crop for their rotation and helps this country become more energy independent. It also has a very aggressive nutrition program to help people who need help buying food, which is very important.

This bill is about rural development, about making rural America all it can be, creating jobs, and helping meet this country's energy needs, creating a level of energy independence.

This bill is also about food security for this country. We have been very fortunate in the United States. We have not suffered the lack of food that other countries have. I believe it is because of farm bills of the past, and it is because family farmers have done such a great job meeting this country's food demands.

We need to have a farm bill that helps support those family farmers, and that is exactly what this farm bill does. Is it perfect? No. But is it pretty darn good? Yes. This farm bill does things for people in production agriculture that it needs to do to make sure they remain in business, to make sure this country's food security needs are met.

So when I read editorials in newspapers on the east coast, west coast, in the Washington Post, Boston Herald, Dallas Morning News, Los Angeles Times—and the list goes on and on—that talk about this farm bill being loaded with waste and giveaways and lard, I ask the folks who write these editorials to come out to Montana and talk to somebody who has their hands in the dirt. Go out to the Midwest and see the kinds of challenges these folks have and ask yourself: Is this farm bill really full of the kind of waste you are talking about? Because it is not. It is a farm bill that meets the needs of America's family farmers. As I have said many times before, if we lose this country's family farmers, this country will change forever, and not for the better.

So I applaud the folks who worked on the conference committee from both parties, from all corners of this country, to develop a farm bill that meets the needs of this country. I hope the Members of this Senate join me later on today in voting for this farm bill and sending it to the President's desk. I hope the President signs it because it is the right thing to do.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll of the Senate.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it has now been 10 days since the devastating tropical cyclone hit the country of Burma. The cyclone, which brought sustained winds of 130 miles an hour, with gusts as high as 160 miles an hour, really caused widespread destruction across this Asian nation.

As you can see from the before and after satellite photographs that are on this chart, the devastation was particularly severe in the country's low-lying delta area. A 12-foot wall of water swept away entire villages, leaving thousands dead and homeless. Bodies floated in floodwaters, and survivors tried to reach dry ground on boats, using blankets as sails. Fights broke out around the few shops that were able to provide any kind of food to the hungry people.

The United Nations has estimated that between 1.2 million and 1.9 million people have been severely affected and that cyclone-related deaths could reach over 100,000. Already, more than 200,000 people are reported missing.

Immediately after the cyclone, countries around the world, including the United States, offered emergency supplies and assistance. We offered help in transporting badly needed food, water, and medicine. In fact, U.S. Navy ships that by coincidence were in the region for training exercises have remained in the vicinity to offer help. Yet almost 2 weeks after the cyclone, this natural disaster has been made worse by the reluctance of the Burmese military government to even accept international aid on the scale that is necessary. Instead, they have ignored the plight of their own people, as the entire world watches. Not only have they refused most outside assistance, they broadcast shameless propaganda showing the military handing out aid to the people. Yet reports from the ground indicate the government has done little or nothing to really help. In fact, there are reports that the government's military has confiscated some of the limited aid that has been allowed to enter into the country.

Not only has the military ignored the suffering of its own people, but it tried to push through a sham referendum at the same time. Can you imagine a national election in the midst of this devastation? Critical time and resources were used to intimidate people to the polls—time and resources that should have been spent for helpless and suffering victims.

U.N. Secretary Ban Ki-moon summed up the situation when he said:

This is not about politics; it is about saving people's lives. There is absolutely no more time to lose.

He continued:

Unless more aid gets into the country very quickly, we face an outbreak of infectious diseases that could dwarf today's crisis.

In a country that already has one of the worst health care systems of the world, it is even harder for people who need medical attention to find it. The environment is a rich breeding ground for infection and contagious disease. We are hearing disturbing reports of badly injured people trying to dress their own wounds. The government has repeatedly forced humanitarian organizations such as Doctors Without Borders to leave the hardest hit areas. Bodies are decomposing. The contamination is spreading. The immediate