

numbers around, let's have a discussion on that. But right now, people are desperate.

Last night around 6 or 6:30, I spoke to the man who is in charge of FEMA, and he said we are spending money every day on Lee and on Irene. These are not a couple of women; one is a tropical storm, and the other is a hurricane. They are not spending money other places. Why? Because they don't have the money.

As the Presiding Officer knows, there are people in her State who have lost their homes. This is all up and down the coast, from the coast of Florida up to Maine, and even places inward. As we talked about yesterday, some of the very severe damage was not on the coastline but, for example, in the State of Vermont, the worst storm likely they have ever had, and those people are trying to get from one place to the next, but they have scores of bridges that are inoperable. And that money—what money they have left in FEMA—will run out I think he said on the 25th. If things keep going the way they are, on the 25th of this month, they will be out of money—no money.

So we need to get this done. Procedurally, we are on this, and I can't move to the highway bill and the FAA bill. And, I repeat, the FAA bill expires. So I hope we can have something worked out with this Senator so we can get this bill done.

The disasters facing this country are untoward. Forty-eight States have already had emergency declarations. Some States have had multiple emergency declarations. Only two States—West Virginia and Michigan—have not had emergency declarations. We have had in the State of Texas, as an example, 20,000 fires since the first of the year; on Sunday alone, 19 fires. Millions of acres have burned, and 2,000 homes have burned to the ground. That is what FEMA is all about.

FEMA is an organization that is relatively new, but as a country we have been helping people who have experienced disasters since we have been a country.

In the early 1800s, there was a big fire in the State of New Hampshire. I believe the date was 1813. The Federal Government stepped in to help with the rebuilding there. That is the way it should be. That is what our country is all about. I am sorry, Madam President, it was 1803. In 1803, the Federal Government played a role in rebuilding after a calamity in New Hampshire. Congress passed legislation that year to help New Hampshire recover from the devastating fire they had.

FEMA was established in 1979. To this point, it appears this could very likely be the worst disaster year in the history of the country. Irene alone is one of the five worst disasters monetarily we have had in this country.

So I hope my Republican colleagues will work with us and help us move these things along. It is important that we do that. It is important that we do

that as quickly as we can so that people in Joplin, MO, and other places in the country that have been devastated can receive the help they deserve from the Federal Government.

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 be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 1549, H.R. 2832, AND H.R. 2887

Mr. REID. Madam President, there are three bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bills by title for the second time en bloc.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1549) to provide tax relief for American workers and businesses, to put workers back on the job while rebuilding and modernizing America, and to provide pathways back to work for Americans looking for jobs.

A bill (H.R. 2832) to extend the Generalized System of Preferences, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 2887) to provide an extension of surface and air transportation programs, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I would object to any further proceedings with respect to these three bills.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The bills will be placed on the calendar.

The Senator from Nebraska.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. JOHANNIS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to engage in a colloquy with my Republican colleagues—Senators ROBERTS, PORTMAN, HOEVEN, BLUNT, and ISAKSON—and in the event the minority leader does appear to offer comments, that we interrupt our colloquy for the minority leader to speak.

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

TRADE AGREEMENTS

Mr. JOHANNIS. Madam President, I rise today with my colleagues to talk about trade and the importance of trade and specifically to talk about three pending trade agreements. And

when I say "pending," man alive, am I emphasizing "pending." These agreements have been around a very long time. And I am referring to Korea, Panama, and Colombia.

We all know the benefits of trade in the United States. In Nebraska, my home State, more than 19,000 jobs and more than \$5.5 billion in revenue were directly tied to exports last year.

In trade discussions, we often hear about the need to level the playing field. Well, these agreements do exactly that. They eliminate tariffs and a whole host of other barriers on most agricultural products, including products that are important to my State: beef, corn, soybeans, and pork. No doubt about it, they increase the economic opportunities for Nebraska farmers and ranchers, for businesses and for workers.

Well, for 3 years, we have heard the President say the right thing. In fact, every time he would say something about this, I thought, finally, the trade agreements are going to bust loose and we are going to have an opportunity to vote on them.

He said in last year's State of the Union:

If America sits on the sidelines while other Nations sign trade deals, we will lose the chance to create jobs on our shores.

Then again in May, the President called for a "robust, forward-looking trade agenda that emphasizes exports and domestic job growth."

Just last week, the President noted that now is the time. He said, of "a series of trade agreements that would make it easier for American companies to sell their products in Panama, Colombia and South Korea," now is the time. If now is the time, why is the administration continuing to fail to act? It has been 1,538 days since the Korea agreement was signed. It has been 1,540 days since the Panama agreement was signed. It has been 1,758 days since we completed negotiations with Colombia.

As I said, I have colleagues with me today who are in a much better position than I would be to explain the positive impacts of these trade agreements. I am going to ask that Senator ROBERTS speak first, Senator PORTMAN, Senator HOEVEN, Senator BLUNT, and Senator ISAKSON. It is my hope that if there is time permitting, I will wrap up.

I ask Senator ROBERTS, as former chairman of the House Agriculture subcommittee and ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee today, how important are these agreements to agriculture and job creation in the United States?

Mr. ROBERTS. Madam President, I thank my colleague and dear friend from Nebraska for the question.

In the end, the biggest consequence for inaction that is now facing our Nation, our biggest challenge, is jobs. In regards to his question, the three pending trade agreements add up to \$13 billion in additional exports and an estimated 250,000 jobs. From the agricultural perspective, the three pending

trade agreements represent \$2.5 billion, if they are ever implemented.

The estimates are that the three agreements in total are expected to increase direct exports by \$129.5 million just for Kansas farmers and ranchers and an additional 1,150 jobs for our State. For folks on the farm, these export markets are absolutely critical. Approximately one-third of our crop production is exported. For wheat, that number jumps to one-half.

The administration's prolonged delay is causing U.S. businesses and producers to simply lose market share. We are losing out. Other countries are not waiting. They are enacting trade agreements without the United States.

Let me give a very good example. The Colombia-Canada trade agreement went into force on August 15 of this year. Already, Nutresa, the largest food processor in Colombia, has announced it will source all of its wheat from Canada to take advantage of the lower duties the Canadian wheat will receive from the trade agreement. Nutresa's wheat demand alone represents 50 percent of all wheat imports to that country. Our Kansas Farm Bureau estimates that Kansas farmers stand to lose \$21 million from lost wheat sales alone and \$38 million from all agricultural exports just by doing nothing on the trade agreement.

Soon after the United States negotiated the trade agreement with Korea, the European Union followed suit. In July, the Korea-European Union trade agreement went into effect. According to Korean customs, within the first 29 days of July, I say to my friend, the European exports were up 34 percent.

Get this one: Notably, aerospace equipment increased by a whopping 1,693 percent. That is astounding. Kansas is a major player in the aviation sector, exporting \$2.7 billion in transportation equipment last year. As the aviation capital of the world, Wichita's aviation companies and 17,000 workers have much to lose in trying to compete against the European Union.

It is long overdue time for the President to put some action behind his words. Send the three trade agreements to Congress immediately.

I am going to make a statement that I regret to say. Trade assistance notwithstanding, I am very sad to say that I do not believe we are going to see any trade agreement this year or the next. I hope my prediction is not correct. This is ridiculous.

Every third foggy night, the President makes a speech and says: We need these trade agreements. We are losing market share.

Well, I don't see the trade agreements. These are not the trade agreements. Maybe somebody can find them here on the floor or in the House. Maybe they are somewhere. But I think they are in the White House, and until we get the politics out of this and the President sends the trade agreements here, what on Earth is he doing saying we should be passing these trade

agreements? We don't have the bill. Send us the bill, Mr. President.

As the administration delays moving forward on these export agreements with Korea, Panama, and Colombia, what is happening to American exports to these important markets?

Senator PORTMAN is an expert on this issue. There is not anybody in this Senate who is more of an expert on trade. If you apply the administration's own metrics, how many jobs will be created—I am not talking about lost but will be created by these pending agreements?

Mr. PORTMAN. I thank my colleague from Kansas, who has just made the case eloquently as to why we need to move forward.

To answer his question, when you apply the metrics the President of the United States and his administration have used for these three trade agreements alone, they would create 250,000 new jobs. I ask my colleagues, with 9 percent unemployment and continued bad economic news, can't we use those jobs? By the way, jobs that are related to trade tend to be higher paying, tend to have more benefits. This is exactly what we need to do in this Senate and in the House and here in Washington—put the partisanship aside and move forward on what makes sense to create jobs.

I can't think of anything that would have a more immediate impact on those exporters Senator ROBERTS talked about, who right now are seeing their market share eroded because the United States is sitting on its hands. In 2006, the Colombia agreement was finalized. It has been tinkered with since then, but we are talking 5 years ago. It is unbelievable. When we have sat on our hands and not moved forward with giving our farmers and our workers and our service providers the chance to go into that Colombian market, you are exactly right, they have gone ahead and made trade agreements with other folks.

Colombia is a great example. Back when we negotiated this agreement and completed it—and I was the U.S. Trade Representative then, as the Senator indicated, and I negotiated with the then-President of Colombia, President Uribe, who made lots of concessions, including on manufacturing and agricultural services. At that time, we had a 71-percent market share in terms of exports of agricultural products—wheat, corn, and soybeans—into Colombia—a 71-percent market share. Today, that market share is about 26 percent. Why? Because after we completed our agreement with Colombia, they engaged with other countries, including the Mercosur countries of Argentina and Brazil, and now they are buying their products instead from those countries that got their act together and moved forward with trade agreements that this President will not get his act together on and send to us.

As Senator ROBERTS said, just recently, in August, this summer, they

completed an agreement with Canada. Guess what the Canadians love to export—the same kind of wheat we love to export. So the Senator is right, they are going to take the wheat market away from Kansas and North Dakota and other States that really need those jobs and need those exports.

We have to move forward. It is really a crime that we have not been able to provide our farmers, workers, and service providers these opportunities.

Mr. ROBERTS. Will the Senator yield for one quick question?

Mr. PORTMAN. Yes. Absolutely.

Mr. ROBERTS. The Senator has been there and done the negotiating. He knows these trade agreements not only apply to our exports but our national security. What has this continued delay done—what does it do to the credibility of the people who are actually negotiating, our trade representatives?

Mr. PORTMAN. Unfortunately, I think some of these countries—all three of which are great allies of the United States: Panama, Colombia, and South Korea—feel as though the United States has let them down.

We are going to move forward here, I believe. I am more optimistic than the Senator from Kansas. I believe the President will finally send these forward. He has to. The logic is difficult to escape. Why wouldn't you? And that is good. We will be able to move forward, I hope, with not just opening more markets but helping on our relationships with these incredibly important allies. But in the meantime, there has been damage done. The Senator is absolutely right. I think they believe in some respects that the rug has been pulled out from under them. They made huge concessions and commitments to the United States and politically took great risks.

Frankly, in Colombia and Panama, where they moved forward immediately to ratify these agreements in their legislature, it wasn't just the administration, it was the elected representatives of the people, as we are, who took risks to say: Yes, we want to be a partner with the United States of America, the greatest economy on the face of the Earth and this beacon of hope and opportunity, and here we are in America letting them down.

So in both its commercial impacts on the United States—we have lost market share, we have lost jobs because of it, but it also has had an impact, as Senator ROBERTS says, in terms of our standing in the world.

We have to move forward not just with these three, but the important point is that we have to move forward with additional agreements. There are over 100 trade agreements being negotiated right now around the world, and because the United States does not have a trade promotion authority, the ability for the President to negotiate and bring an agreement back here for an up-or-down vote, we are not engaged in these agreements. We are engaged in

one, which is a regional one—the trans-pacific partnership—but none of these bilateral ones, which is where you are really going to get these trade openings and new exports and, therefore, new jobs.

This is a bigger issue that must be addressed. This Congress, I hope, will address it in the context of the votes we are going to have in connection with the trade agreements. We are going to promote getting the United States back in the game of expanding our trade and helping U.S. jobs.

By the way, it was mentioned earlier that it is not just that we have the opportunity to create over 200,000 jobs. It is also that if we do not move forward on these three agreements, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has done some analysis showing we would lose 380,000 jobs.

This sort of goes both ways. There is a cost to not moving forward, and that is also hundreds of thousands of jobs we desperately need in States such as Ohio and the States represented by the Senators who are here with us on the floor today. The International Trade Commission now says these three agreements alone would expand exports annually by \$13 billion—again meaning jobs and opportunity.

It is time for us to move forward. Senator ROBERTS has talked about what is happening with the European Union, which actually negotiated its agreements after we completed ours.

In the auto sector, by the way, there is an EU-Korea agreement that says the 8-percent tariff on imported cars has already started being reduced. That has resulted in the companies sending UK cars, including Hondas that are being produced in the United Kingdom—they are being exported to South Korea. We have a Honda plant in Ohio. I visited it recently. There are 4,200 Ohio workers there. We want to export Hondas from Ohio to Korea. We can do that with these export agreements.

It is time for us to move forward. It is not the time for us to play politics. We have to move forward because we need these jobs and because, again, the United States should be at the forefront of these agreements in order to not just protect the market share we have but expand it. Ninety-five percent of the consumers live outside of our borders, and we need to access those consumers.

I now ask, if I could, one of my colleagues to talk a little about his experience in his State.

JOHN HOEVEN was Governor of North Dakota, so he was like the trade representative from North Dakota. He was out there promoting trade as Governor, and North Dakota is a State that has a lot of exports, including wheat, as we talked about earlier, so they are being hit by what Senators ROBERTS and JOHANNIS talked about in terms of what is happening in Colombia today with the Canadian agreement and also the EU agreement with Korea.

I ask Senator HOEVEN if he would talk a little about why these agree-

ments with Colombia and Panama are so important to his State.

Mr. HOEVEN. I thank Senator PORTMAN, and I thank Senator JOHANNIS for organizing this discussion on a very important issue, a timely issue. It is good to be here with Senator ROBERTS, with Senator BLUNT and Senator ISAKSON. I think, coming from our different States, we show how important these trade agreements are not only to our individual States across the country but how important these trade agreements are to our Nation right now.

When we are talking trade, we are talking jobs. We need to create more jobs in this country, and it is the private sector that creates jobs. It is business investment, it is companies that create jobs. Our job, our task, our role is to create an environment where our companies and our entrepreneurs and American ingenuity that built the greatest economic engine in the history of the world—this country, this economy, this U.S. economy—we have to create that environment so they can invest and create those jobs.

One of the important ways we do that is with good trade agreements. Let's make sure our companies can export their great products and services all over the world. We have to compete in a global, high-tech economy, and these trade agreements let us do it. That is why it is so important that we move forward.

Today, we are on the floor of the Senate saying: Why do we have these trade agreements? Thursday night, we heard from the President that we need to move forward with these trade agreements. We want to move forward with these trade agreements. We are ready to go. We have been for some time. In fact, the Senators here on the floor and others have been working very hard to do everything we can to make sure we have cleared the path so these trade agreements can come to the Senate floor.

It was not too long ago that Senator JOHANNIS, myself, and Senator PORTMAN went with Senator MITCH MCCONNELL and Senator MORAN over to South Korea to meet with President Lee. He wants the agreements. He is ready to go. As a matter of fact, he said, please ratify the agreements in your country, get them over to me, because I am ready to take that to my legislators and get this approved.

Second, our President said there are some concerns we need to deal with as part of these trade agreements. He said we need to address TSA, trade assistant adjustment. We said we will work with TSA. We will make sure we have enough Senators so it is squared away. We have it covered. That has been communicated. So the question is: Why at this point don't we have the trade agreements? That is the question I think that has to be asked. Where are they? Why aren't they here on the Senate floor so we can move forward with them? In our State, as others men-

tioned in their States, they are incredibly important.

A few big stats to follow on what Senator PORTMAN mentioned a minute ago. For every 4-percent increase in trade, we create a million jobs in this country. For every 4-percent increase in trade, a million jobs in this country are created. How important is that? The United States-South Korea free trade agreement alone means more than a quarter of a million jobs, more than \$10 billion in increased U.S. exports to that country alone. I cannot think of a time when it is more important to create those jobs than right now when we have more than 14 million people out of work and many more who are either not working because they have not been able to get a job or who are underemployed. Unemployment is more than 9 percent.

This is one of the ways we create that environment that gets our people back to work by empowering the private sector to make that investment and create those jobs.

I was just back in North Dakota, and one of the many events I went to was an expansion of one of the Caterpillar company's locations in West Fargo, ND. They remanufacture a lot of their equipment in West Fargo, ND. This equipment goes all over the world. It is part of the huge machines that Cat makes. They use these machines for excavating, for mining, road building, for all these things all over the world, and they are the technology leader in the world in this huge equipment. They bought Bucyrus, which is huge in mining, so now they are big in the mining business. Getting into places such as Colombia and Panama is incredibly important for Caterpillar. It is not just about creating jobs in North Dakota, but think of the impact throughout the heartland in Indiana or in Illinois or, as Senator ROBERTS talked about, agriculture.

In North Dakota we have more cattle than people. I think we have more than 3 million cattle. Right now to send them to South Korea, we pay more than 40 percent tariff. How do we compete with Argentina or Australia in that situation? This is an opportunity. This is absolutely an opportunity. We need to reach out and grab it with both hands. We have the President right now saying, pass those trade agreements. Absolutely. Please get them down here to us. We have worked so hard to make sure we have cleared all the hurdles, TAA, or whatever else is required. Bring those trade agreements to us. We stand ready to pass them.

Mr. PORTMAN. Would the Senator yield for a second? The Senator talked about being at home and talking to his constituents about this, and I am sure all of us have stories like this, but I will tell you this morning we had one of our weekly coffees and the Ohio pork producers came. There were about 12 pork producers from around the State of Ohio. Do you know what the No. 1 issue was they raised with me? Trade

and getting these trade agreements done. Why? Because it affects their prices directly. They have to have these international sales in order to make ends meet. Particularly with the price of feed going up, they have to have these foreign markets. It was interesting that of all the issues they could have raised with me, the one they are most concerned about is to make sure we get these three agreements done, and then move forward with the additional agreements.

It is our job to provide the environment for success. Part of that environment is to give our exporters the ability to have a level playing field to access these markets. They are the best farmers in the world. We have some of the most productive land in the world. They just need a fair shake.

Mr. HOEVEN. It is absolutely true. In handing off the ball in this discussion, I want to go back to the trade adjustment assistance, which I mentioned earlier. There were a number of things the administration wanted to see before bringing these trade agreements forward to us for ratification. Senator BLUNT and Senator PORTMAN were instrumental—and along with these two, Senator JOHANNIS, myself, Senator ISAKSON, and others. We even signed on to a letter not once but I think twice, to make sure we got it right. Senator BLUNT's leadership in making sure we had taken all the necessary steps so the administration was prepared and willing to bring these agreements to the Senate floor has been covered. I thank the Senator for that leadership. He may want to touch on that, but I know how important the trade agreements are to the State of Missouri. But I also thank the leadership of Senator PORTMAN, as well, in making sure we addressed TAA and all of the issues that needed to be addressed as part of moving forward with these trade agreements.

Mr. BLUNT. I think what Senator PORTMAN and I thought when the President said for these three trade agreements to be voted on, we had to have trade adjustment assistance. We looked at the negotiated package. It was not exactly what any of us who signed the letter would have negotiated. We said, look, these are the jobs that are the low-hanging fruit of job creation if we get these three trade bills. We are willing to look at the Baucus camp-negotiated TAA, and support it in a way the White House can sign it and send these agreements up.

Senator HOEVEN mentioned, as he and I and all of us were sitting in the House Chamber last Thursday night, listening to the President's remarks when he said we need to pass these three trade agreements, I was almost sure the next sentence would be: And so tomorrow, I am sending these trade agreements up. That next sentence did not occur. Just like the week in August where the President was on his bus tour and every single day on the bus tour he said Congress can do some-

thing right now that would create more American jobs if they will pass these three trade agreements. Every time he said that, even though I was hearing it on the TV, I could not help but talk back to the television or the radio and say: Well, we cannot pass them unless you send them up. You are absolutely right, this is one of the easiest things we could do to create jobs, Mr. President, but we have to have the agreements from you before we can vote on them. Don't tell the American people all we have to do is pass the bill when you know that you have to send the bill up before we can pass the bill. We need these three agreements. As Senator PORTMAN has pointed out, we need more agreements, but that is not happening right now. We do need the President to have the authority that I, and I think all of us, would be more than willing to give him, but that is not part of this package, the trade promotion authority we wish to see extended into the future.

Right now we have three agreements that have been negotiated for a long time, and whether it is the Missouri and North Dakota beef industry or the Missouri and Ohio pork industry or the grain industry that we all are impacted by, there is a real opportunity here and these markets are waiting for us.

To look at our State, since 2002, exports have increased more than three times faster than the State domestic product has grown. So for those who say, well, exports cost American jobs or Missouri jobs, they clearly provide those jobs. U.S. farm exports reached an all-time high in 2010, amounting to more than \$115 billion in sales. For every \$1 billion worth of agricultural exports, there are an estimated 8,000 jobs. So these countries are waiting for agreements that will increase trade in soybeans and beef and corn and pork and dairy products and processed food; in fact, in processed goods of all kinds. We cannot get to those markets until we pass these trade agreements.

All of us are eager to work with the President to get that done. All of us are eager for him to send us those trade agreements. Since these agreements were negotiated, others have negotiated agreements and launched them—and it may have been mentioned already this morning, but if it has not, it is important to understand that on July 1, the European Union trade agreement with South Korea went into place and they had a 1-month, 38-percent increase year over year the first month of that trade agreement.

The Canada-Colombia agreement went into place on August 15. Having been to Colombia and worked on this for some time, there is no question there is a preference for our goods, but once they start buying these other products, then you have to convince them you need to come back to the product you would rather have had to start with if that product had had an even shot at the marketplace.

Panama is negotiating all kinds of work agreements and expansion agree-

ments on the canal we are disadvantaged in because we have not passed that agreement.

Let's get these three agreements done. Let's start creating the private sector jobs these agreements clearly will lead to. As we have talked to the White House and the President about that, my good friend from Georgia, JOHNNY ISAKSON, has been in the middle of all of those discussions. We know what can happen. For it to happen, we have to get these agreements sooner rather than later. Let's get them up here. Let's get them passed. Let's get them back in the hands of our new trading partners and see these jobs increase.

I am pleased to recognize and encourage the ongoing efforts for this effort with my good friend, Mr. ISAKSON.

Mr. ISAKSON. I thank Senator BLUNT.

I thank Senator JOHANNIS for organizing this colloquy.

I represent a State that is home to the second largest port on the eastern seaboard in the United States of America. The port is Savannah. We are talking about creating jobs in America. The port of Savannah directly employs 300,000 people in the southeastern United States. Can you think of what an impact this is going to have to increase that employment if we get these free trade agreements?

Let me give you an example that is amazing. South Korea surpassed Japan in 2010 as the second largest Northeast Asian destination for South Atlantic exports behind only China—second largest in all of Asia behind only China—most of that going out of the port of Savannah, most of that being agricultural products from your State and from your State and from mine.

Senator PORTMAN talked about pork. In Georgia it is all about chickens and cattle. We are No. 1 in poultry, and South Korea is a huge importer of our poultry. They would be a lot bigger with a free trade agreement.

Let me give another number that is chilling. South Korea's imports from South Korea into the United States went up by 26 percent last year. Our exports to them went up by 15 percent. That is an 11-percent negative in the trade deficit, which causes us tremendous problems.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I ask for unanimous consent for 5 additional minutes to close.

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

Mr. ISAKSON. So my point is very simple this: We can help to balance our trade deficit. We can help to increase employment in the southeastern United States. We can help poultry, we can help pork, and we can help beef. It has been 968 days since the President could have sent us these free trade agreements, and he has not. My point in this debate is very simple. There is

one person in the United States of America standing between us and more job creation, and it is the resident of the White House, President Obama.

I wish to turn it over to the organizer of this event, Senator JOHANNIS.

Mr. JOHANNIS. Madam President, I end my comments today by saying to all of my fellow Senators, thank you so very much for coming to the floor today and making the case. There is an old saying in a profession I used to be engaged in: I rest my case. Well, after hearing from these fine gentlemen about the importance of these agreements and why we need to have the President send them here, I rest my case. It is going to improve job creation. It is going to improve our opportunity to export our products. It is going to level the playing field. It is going to give our producers the opportunity to reclaim market share that has been lost while we have been waiting for these agreements to come here.

The final point I wish to make is this. I come from a State where unemployment is right above 4 percent. In this recession in Nebraska, unemployment never went over 5 percent. In fact, as I was doing my townhall meetings across the State, I had members of my business community coming to me and saying: One of the challenges we are facing is finding the workers for the jobs we are creating. Therefore, in my State, trade adjustment assistance would not be the high priority it is in many States. Notwithstanding that fact, when Senator BLUNT came to me and said, look, the President is insisting on trade adjustment assistance as a condition to move these agreements and would I sign on to a letter that will back trade adjustment assistance, I said I would. Why? Because the trade agreements are important to us.

It is my hope that after the many speeches we have all given—the many speeches I have given on the importance of these agreements not only on the Senate floor but across this country—the President is listening and will finally send us these agreements so we can work with the President. We can join forces on these agreements and do everything we can to get the votes in the Senate and in the House to pass them and to put them on his desk and create 250,000 new jobs.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, over the past 2 weeks, I have traveled the State of Connecticut, as the Presiding Officer has done in the State of New York, and she has described eloquently the damage she has seen in her State. I have seen much the same in mine. I have seen the destruction of small businesses, of homes; rivers swelling, flooding of historic dimensions causing significant destruction; the wind and rain striking Con-

necticut with a fury, its ferocity virtually unmatched in recent memory.

I met with families and community leaders, farmers and small businesses, about the help they will need to rebuild their homes and their businesses and their lives and their livelihoods. It is a powerful and moving struggle. The citizens of Connecticut, similar to the citizens of New York and others struck by this storm, have acted with determination and resolve, not with desperation or despair. They are determined and dedicated to rebuild and recover from this storm, but they need the help that is provided by FEMA. We are here, hopefully in a bipartisan effort, to make sure these communities and others like them throughout the Northeast and throughout the United States have the help and the real consequential aid they need to make this recovery in rebuilding their lives.

The early estimates suggest that the damage caused by Irene could reach more than \$10 billion, making it one of the 10 costliest disasters in U.S. history. The suffering and real sadness of Connecticut citizens gives us a bond and a cause in common with millions of other Americans who have suffered from hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and other natural disasters across the country. This year alone, we have seen flooding on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and other rivers in the Midwest, devastating tornadoes in the South, wildfires in the South and West, and now Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee.

In times of natural disaster, Americans come together. In times when they face crises, Americans rally as neighbors, as a community. Regardless of specific States where they live, they come together to rebuild their homes, to make common cause, to recognize our bonds as a nation. The spirit of our Nation is that we put people above politics every time, without exception; that we provide disaster relief for victims, such as Connecticut residents now, and with the resources they need to rebuild.

Currently, FEMA is funding disaster relief for over 550 disasters, including 29 in Oklahoma, 21 in Kentucky, 17 in Texas, 19 in Mississippi, and 18 in Kansas. Yet 2 weeks ago, House majority leader ERIC CANTOR stated that relief funds for Hurricane Irene would need to be offset by savings found elsewhere in the Federal budget. I reject that contention and so should this body and my colleagues from those States I have just named and all the other States in the Union. In fact, all but a handful or less have received and are receiving disaster relief just since January of this year.

We need to do everything we can to put Connecticut and America back to work, to make sure our economy moves forward again, to create jobs, and to reduce the deficit. Yes, we need to reduce the deficit and the debt and cut unnecessary and wasteful spending. However, we cannot permit Wash-

ington politics to create a legislative logjam and gridlock that bogs down these efforts for disaster relief. The need is too urgent for thousands of families and businesses in Connecticut and around the country that have been devastated by these unprecedented floods and other natural disasters, such as hurricanes, wildfires, floods, and tornadoes.

Turning disaster assistance into a political football is unacceptable and unconscionable. It is a recipe for gridlock and it is just plain wrong. It is wrong and a disservice to the men and women whose homes and businesses have been hit by the forces of nature that are unpredictable and unpreventable. Now they are attempting to rebuild their lives, and we owe it to them to match their courage and resilience with efforts from FEMA.

We can't prevent those hurricanes or tornadoes or wildfires, but we can step forward when these disasters occur and lend a hand to our neighbors, as we have done throughout our history, and we can provide these communities with the real resources they need to recover, without distinguishing between what State or what part of the country.

There is one story from Connecticut which I think tells a lot about the choices we face right now. Mel Goldstein and his wife Arlene, whose home was completely destroyed by flooding caused by Hurricane Irene, are being told their homeowners insurance will not cover the damage. Their only hope of recovery is FEMA flood insurance and other FEMA assistance. Right now, they are using their savings to stay in a hotel while they rebuild their lives. Mel is one of the best known weathermen in the State of Connecticut. He is an icon in the broadcasting world and a hero to many of us for his struggle against cancer. His treatment in this unstable environment at this point in his recovery adds an unnecessary toll and stress to their lives. As we have in the past, we must come together to help folks such as Arlene and Mel Goldstein move on after the unthinkable happens in their lives. The unthinkable happened to them and to many of their neighbors in East Haven along the shores of Connecticut.

I have heard their voices and seen their faces throughout our State, in communities big and small, where flooding has put a small business out of business and where homes have been destroyed and people are living in shelters or with their neighbors or were for awhile. These kinds of human stories are part of the fabric of the larger story we need to recognize. I hope my colleagues will come together, as we did on the vote yesterday, to approve this measure. The vote yesterday signaled perhaps a return to the bipartisanship that should prevail when the Nation confronts crisis and disaster. Our No. 1 goal, which should be a bipartisan goal, must be to deliver help to our fellow Americans as quickly as possible.