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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Lord, we open our hearts to You in gratitude for the blessing of another day. Renew us, revitalize us with the knowledge of Your loving providence. Have mercy on our Nation and world this day. Solidify the financial foundations of teetering nations and restrain those who seek to reap gain from others' woes.

Lord, bless the many on Capitol Hill who give of their time and talents in such full measure to keep liberty's light burning brightly. May their trust in Your word sustain them with confidence in the difficult days to come.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN 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. INOUE).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 4, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN, a

Senator from the State of New Hampshire, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. SHAHEEN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Following leader remarks, the Senate will be in morning business for 1 hour, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1619.

The Senate will recess from 12:30 to 2:15 today to allow for our weekly caucus meetings.

At 2:30, the Senate will begin consideration of S. 1619, the China currency legislation, which is how it is referred to. Rollcall votes are possible during today's session. We will notify Senators when they are scheduled. I hope Senators, both Democrats and Republicans, who wish to offer amendments will contact the managers of the bill. We need to get these amendments moving as quickly as possible. Hopefully, on most of them, we can do time agreements. This is important legislation, and we need to expedite it as much as possible.

This is a busy work period, and we have a couple of important holidays. We have Yom Kippur, which starts Friday at sundown, which is the highest of all of the holidays of the Jewish faith, and then we have Columbus Day, which is Monday. So we have a couple of short weeks.

CHINA CURRENCY MANIPULATION

Mr. REID. Madam President, last night the Senate held an overwhelming bipartisan vote to move forward with legislation preventing continued currency manipulation by the Chinese Government. This unfair practice, which gives Chinese exports an unmerited advantage in the global marketplace, injures the American economy, it hurts American manufacturers, and it costs American jobs, lots of them.

In 1990, America's trade deficit with China was \$10 billion. Twenty years later, thanks to currency manipulation that gives an edge to Chinese exporters, that trade deficit has soared to \$273 billion—from \$10 billion to \$273 billion. That trade deficit has fueled the loss of about 3 million American jobs, including 2 million manufacturing jobs, in just the last 10 years alone. In Nevada, we have lost more than 14,000 jobs to China trade, and it is all because of currency manipulation. The eight hardest hit States have lost 1.4 million positions total, and 17 States have lost more than 2 percent of their jobs.

Manufacturers simply can't compete when the Chinese Government gives its exporters advantages other countries don't get. American workers and manufacturers work as hard and are as ingenious as any in the world. They don't need special advantages to succeed; they just need a fair shot. This important jobs legislation will give them that fair shot.

Putting an end to China's deliberate actions to undervalue its currency will even the playing field. It will also support 1.6 million American jobs. Demanding a fair playing field will pump \$300 billion into our economy in just a few short years.

But don't take my word for it. Just ask American manufacturers. The Alliance for American Manufacturers called this jobs bill the "deficit-reducing, job-creating, no-cost stimulus that

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



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is desperately needed.” Business groups have lined up to testify to the adverse impacts of currency manipulation on U.S. corporate interests. The American Iron and Steel Institute, the National Association of Manufacturers, and even the U.S. Chamber of Commerce have said the problem pits American and Chinese manufacturers against one another in an unfair fight.

But this issue has also forged some strange alliances. The AFL-CIO has also called for swift action to level the playing field. The chamber of commerce and the AFL-CIO are together on this issue.

This is what the AFL-CIO said:

The single most important job-supporting trade measure that Congress . . . can take is to address the Chinese government’s manipulation of its currency.

Business and labor groups agree that American workers and manufacturers aren’t getting a fair shake, and they agree on what action Congress should take to give them that fair shake. We all know that doesn’t happen very often.

Here in the Senate we have heard the message loudly and clearly. We can’t ignore blatant, unfair trade practices that put American workers at a disadvantage.

Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart once said: “Fairness is what justice really is.” This week, the Senate is demanding justice for American companies and their employees.

I know a few of my Democratic colleagues don’t support this legislation but very few. There are some Republicans who don’t support this legislation but very few. Even though there are a few on each side who don’t support this bill, I think this is the mark of a good piece of legislation—garnering a significant number of votes from each party. That is what bipartisanship is all about. With millions of Americans’ livelihoods at stake, I am pleased to see the Senate working on a truly bipartisan bill.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, there is a lot of talk these days about how Washington is broken and how, unless we do something to fix it, the solutions to our most urgent problems will remain out of reach. The fact is, that is not really true. Congress is not frozen in a state of perpetual gridlock, and the now imminent passage of three long-awaited free-trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea shows it.

For 2½ years, I and other Republicans have stated as clearly as we could to anyone who would listen that we are willing and eager to work with

the Democrats on legislation on which we know both sides agree. Free-trade agreements fall squarely into that category. That is why I have been calling on the President to approve them since his very first day in office. Yet, for reasons I will touch on in a moment, he has actually held back.

It is true that the President had to be convinced of the importance of these agreements. After all, he ran for office promising to renegotiate NAFTA. But once he did come around, his reluctance to act became an emblem for the administration’s entire approach to jobs in which results have taken a back seat to ideology. All the President had to do was to follow through on his own pledge—send these trade agreements to Congress—and we would have had an early bipartisan achievement which didn’t add a single dime to the deficit and which, by his own estimates, would protect tens of thousands of jobs right here at home. Instead, the President passed over what could have been a job-creating, bipartisan layup and devoted the first weeks of his Presidency to a highly partisan stimulus that has since become a national punch line.

So now, 2½ years after the stimulus was signed into law, there are 1.7 million fewer jobs in America, and the President is just this week getting around to free-trade agreements we all knew would create jobs, all of which raises a question: Why didn’t we do this sooner? I think there are two reasons we didn’t do it sooner.

First, the White House was under pressure from unions that don’t like free trade. They have been extracting promises from the White House for 2½ years in exchange for their support. That is one reason.

The second reason the White House didn’t send these agreements up sooner is that the political operators over at the White House seem to believe they benefit from the appearance—the appearance—of gridlock. They are over there telling any reporter who will listen that they plan to run against Congress next year. Their communications director said as much to the New York Times 2 weeks ago.

So that is their explicit strategy—to make people believe Congress can’t get anything done. How do they make sure of that? Well, they do that by proposing legislation they know the other side won’t support even when there is an entire menu of bipartisan proposals the President could choose to pursue instead. How else do we explain the President’s standing before the country in January extolling the job-creating potential of these free-trade agreements, asking Congress to pass them as soon as possible, and then sitting on them until yesterday, preventing Congress from taking the vote? How else do we explain the fact that the President spent the past few weeks running around the country demanding that Congress pass a so-called jobs bill right away even as leading members of his own party admit the Democrats

wouldn’t have the votes to get it through Congress even if it came to the floor? As one senior Democratic aide put it yesterday: “Nobody is all that excited about the President’s jobs bill.”

That is how to create dysfunction—by refusing to acknowledge that we live under a two-party system in this country and that as long as we do, the two parties will have to cooperate to some extent in order to get legislation through Congress. It is the refusal to accept this reality that leads to inaction. The President can govern as though this is the Congress he wants or he can deal with the Congress he has. Along the first path lies gridlock, and along the second lies the kind of legislative progress Americans want. As for Republicans, well, we have been crystal clear from the outset that we prefer the latter route.

So this morning, I reiterate the same plea I have consistently made for the past 2½ years. My suggestion to the President is that he put aside proposals for which we know there is bipartisan opposition and focus instead on proposals on which we know both sides can agree. Free-trade agreements are a good first step, but they are just that—a first step. If we are going to tackle the enormous challenges we face, we need to come together on much more than that. There is bipartisan agreement, for instance, on the need to increase domestic energy exploration, to reverse job-killing regulations, and to reform the corporate tax code so we are more competitive. If the White House really wants to make a statement, it will work with us on all of these issues. If it doesn’t, Americans will only conclude that it would rather have an issue to run on than an impact.

With these trade agreements, we are showing we can work together to create jobs and help the economy, and it is something we should do a lot more of around here.

Madam President, 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 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 majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from Illinois.

FINDING SOLUTIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I listened carefully to the statement made