

on results. I know that does not come easy for some around here. The senior Senator from New York, for example, made it pretty clear yesterday that he is more interested in drawing a contrast with Republicans than he is in actually passing bipartisan legislation that we know will spur job growth. But I do not believe the 14 million Americans looking for work right now care more about contrast than about jobs. The jobs crisis we are in calls for lawmakers to rise above these games.

Americans expect us to do something to help create jobs. That is what we should be doing. That is why Republicans will continue to seek to find Democrats who are more interested in jobs than in political posturing and work with them on bipartisan legislation such as the trade bills we will vote on tonight.

What we will not do, though, is vote in favor of any more misguided stimulus bills because some bill writer slapped the word "jobs" on the cover page. The stimulus bill with the word "jobs" slapped on the cover page and wrapped around a talking-point tax hike is not our idea of what is good for America. We refuse to raise taxes on the very people Americans are depending on to create jobs. We need to be looking for ways to make it easier to create jobs, not harder.

For nearly 3 years, Republicans have told Democrats again and again that we are willing and eager to work with the Democrats anywhere, anytime, on real job-promoting legislation on which both sides could agree.

I have been calling on the President to approve these three free-trade agreements since the day he took the oath of office. All the President had to do was to follow through on these agreements and send them up to Congress, and we would have had an early bipartisan achievement that did not add a single dime to the deficit, that would have convinced people the two sides could work together, and that by the President's own assessment created tens of thousands of jobs right here at home. But he did not. The President chose to push a highly partisan stimulus bill instead that the administration said would keep unemployment below 8 percent. We all know how that turned out. Nearly 3 years later, the only thing left is the nearly \$1 trillion it added to the debt and the government programs it created. As for jobs, well, unemployment has been above 8 percent for 32 months straight, and according to the Labor Department, there are now 1.5 million fewer jobs than there were then.

It is time to try something different. Republicans have proposed a number of ideas that would not only represent a change in direction but would also attract broad bipartisan support. There is no good reason whatsoever for the President and Democrats in Congress to prevent us from doing these things. As I see it, the President actually has a choice: He can spend the next 13

months trying to get Republicans to vote against legislation which will not create sustainable private sector jobs and which is designed to fail in Congress or he can work with us on legislation that will actually encourage small businesses to create jobs and is actually designed to pass.

There is an entire menu of bipartisan job-promoting proposals the President could choose to pursue over the next year. Republicans hope he works with us to approve them. Americans are waiting. We are ready to act. The free-trade agreements we are voting on tonight are a good first step. They demonstrate the way Washington can actually help tackle the jobs crisis, not by spending borrowed money to create temporary jobs—spending borrowed money to create temporary jobs. We have tried that. This will lower barriers to private enterprise, unleashing the power of the private sector to make and sell products, expand market share, and in doing so create sustainable private sector jobs that will not disappear when the Federal cash spigot runs dry. But if we are going to tackle the enormous challenges we face, we need to do much more than that. With these trade agreements, we are showing we can work together to create jobs and help the economy. We can and must do more of this kind of thing.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

UNITED STATES-KOREA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

UNITED STATES-PANAMA TRADE PROMOTION AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

UNITED STATES-COLOMBIA TRADE PROMOTION AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will consider H.R. 3080, H.R. 3079, and H.R. 3078 en bloc, notwithstanding the lack of receipt of papers from the House of Representatives.

Under the previous order, there will be up to 12 hours of debate, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

Mr. JOHANNIS. Madam 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.

Mr. JOHANNIS. Madam President, I come to the floor today—thankfully for the last time, I hope—in support of the pending free-trade agreements with Korea, Panama, and Colombia. For nearly 3 years we have heard the administration say the right things. Yet there were countless delays. It has been 1,566 days since the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement was signed, 1,568 days for the Panama agreement, and 1,786 days since we completed negotiations with Colombia. Finally, though, I believe the waiting has ended, and the administration took action and has submitted these agreements for a vote. I am eager to vote for all three FTAs this evening and to see their job-creating power in action. By the administration's own estimates, these agreements will spur a quarter of a million new jobs.

We should all be able to agree that the benefits of trade are significant. In my home State of Nebraska alone, more than 19,000 jobs and more than \$5.5 billion in revenue were directly tied to exports in this last year. With these agreements, these statistics will only improve. Nebraska is a big agricultural State, and these three agreements eliminate tariffs and other barriers on most agricultural products, including beef, corn, soybeans, and pork—all products grown in Nebraska. In fact, according to the Farm Bureau and economic analysis from the USDA, full implementation of those agreements will result in nearly \$2.5 billion increases in U.S. agricultural exports each year. In Nebraska, this increase in agricultural exports is expected to total about \$125 million per year and add another 1,100 jobs to our State.

The benefits for my home State are not hard to see. In fact, they would be hard to miss. As the Nation's fourth largest exporter of feed grain and a key beef State, the U.S.-Korea agreement holds great opportunity and promise for Nebraska. It immediately eliminates duties on nearly two-thirds of U.S. agricultural exports to Korea. U.S. exports of corn for feed enter at zero duty—zero duty immediately. For the second largest corn State, that is a significant leveling of the playing field. And it phases out the 40-percent tariff on beef muscle meat and the 18-percent tariff on variety meats.

The Colombia agreement offers great opportunities to both manufacturing and the agricultural sector. Just one example: Nebraska manufactures and exports irrigation pivots to customers all over the world. Currently Colombia imposes a 15-percent duty on pivots, which would be eliminated by this trade agreement. This will allow Nebraska manufacturers to compete on a level playing field with European companies.

The Colombia agreement also eliminates barriers for many Nebraska agricultural products, including beef, corn, soybeans, pork, and wheat. In particular, the agreement immediately eliminates the 80-percent duty on some

of the most important products to the U.S. beef industry—prime and choice cuts of meat. The Colombia agreement eliminates all tariffs on wheat and barriers on corn and on soybeans.

Unfortunately, during these years of delay I referenced at the start of my comments this morning, negotiators for other countries saw an opportunity. Negotiators from the European Union, Argentina, and Canada saw the void the U.S. companies, workers, and farmers should have been filling, and they acted. As a result, our exporters now face even greater competition in these markets. For example, when the U.S.-Colombia agreement was signed, American wheat farmers supplied 70 percent of the Colombian market. In 2010, U.S. wheat growers supplied only 45 percent of that market. During that time, the United States lost market share in Colombia to competitors such as Argentina and Canada that did not wait on the sidelines, and now they enjoy duty-free access. Because of unnecessary delays, our farmers have lost out in markets they dominated when this agreement was signed. But if we act quickly, if we pass these agreements tonight, U.S. producers can work to build back market share.

I am confident that Nebraska farmers, businesses, workers, and those around the country can compete with anybody in the world, and in doing so we can create jobs here at home. By the administration's estimates, the Korea, Colombia and Panama Free Trade Agreements will create, as I have referenced, 250,000 U.S. jobs. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce took a broader view; they have an estimate of 380,000 jobs to be created. But either number is worth celebrating.

In May, the President called for "a robust, forward-looking trade agenda that emphasizes exports and domestic job growth." I am glad the President has turned these words into action on these long overdue job-creating agreements. These three bipartisan votes should have been near the top of the agenda 3 years ago. By now, we should be voting on new agreements this administration has negotiated, not the leftover work of the past administration.

During the challenging economic times our Nation has endured, we should have been exerting every ounce of energy to get our economy going. That is not done by heavyhanded government regulation and massive, unsustainable new government spending. It is accomplished by lowering and removing barriers so our job creators can flourish in a global environment. That is what we have today—an opportunity to give our job creators a chance to flourish in the global environment. We cannot ignore that the fastest growing opportunities for American businesses, farms, and ranchers are not in the United States or outside our borders, they are overseas in rapidly developing countries where 95 percent of the world's population lives.

I sincerely hope those long delays have not hurt our ability to negotiate high-quality trade agreements, but more importantly, I hope it has not hurt the ability of Americans to compete in these growing markets.

I look forward to working with the administration over the rest of this Congress on forward-looking trade efforts. Real progress forward would produce even more opportunities.

I am optimistic this morning. I am optimistic that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join me in voting in favor of the trade agreements with Korea, Panama, and Colombia. Together, we can allow hard-working Americans to create jobs here at home.

I hope these three agreements are the beginning, not the end.

Following today's vote, we should rejoice in an accomplishment, but more work remains to be done. I am prepared to tackle this endeavor, as I did when I was Secretary of Agriculture. For the sake of our Nation, I hope to find willing partners on these three votes and, in the future, more trade agreements and additional opportunities.

Before yielding the floor, I ask unanimous consent that all time during the quorum calls be divided equally.

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

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARPER. Madam 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.

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I was on the phone earlier this week with a friend in Delaware. We were talking about these free-trade agreements negotiated by the Bush administration and fine-tuned by the Obama administration. My friend said: Why do we have free-trade agreements anyway? I said: Let's go back a little bit in time. At the end of World War II, when the baby boomers and my sister and I came along, the United States was on top of the world. Our industrial infrastructure was strong. We were a vibrant economy. We had come out of the Great Depression with all guns blazing, while a lot of the rest of the world lay in ruin. Some of the nations that would go on to become our greatest competitors, including China, Korea, and some others as well, were in the midst of wars of their own, and eventually they would be governed—at least in part in Korea—by a Communist form of government. So the competition wasn't that great.

Then things started to change. The competition got a whole lot stronger. I remember when I was a kid growing up, at Christmas time we were opening presents around the Christmas tree. I

grew up in Danville, VA. We received a knickknack or something from friends of our family, and my father turned it over and it said "Made in Japan." He and my mom kind of sneered at that, as if it were unworthy of us—anything being made in Japan.

Things have changed—in some ways for the better and in other ways maybe not. For a long time, we were the 800-pound gorilla in the room. In terms of auto sales, I think we had about 90 percent of the market share in the United States—maybe more than that—well into the latter part of the last century. Now we don't. Our market share in cars is less than 50 percent. The quality is good, but the market share is less. If we look at the amount of cars that come to us from Korea, they will roughly export 500,000 vehicles to the United States this year, as they did last year and will next year. We will export barely 5,000 cars to them. Think about that. Roughly, for every 1 American car we sell them, they sell us about 100. That is not free trade. As it turns out, it is not fair trade either. They don't put tariffs on their cars. They have nontariff barriers—a very clever way to keep our vehicles out. It could have to do with the environmental equipment on the car, the fuel system, transmissions, you name it. They find all kinds of ways to keep our vehicles out. We don't do that or play that game. They take advantage of that.

We wish to sell in a place such as Panama. In this country, a lot of people like the white meat of the chicken. Overseas, a lot of people eat the dark meat. It is an opportunity to export the dark meat for us. If we want to export leg quarters, drumsticks, and thighs in Panama, normally, a package of leg quarters costs \$10 here, and there is a 260-percent tariff for those leg quarters going into Panama. They have to pay \$36. I don't know what that translates into pesos, but they pay \$36 for \$10 worth of chicken.

We allow other countries, whether it is Korea, Panama, Colombia or many other nations, to sell their goods and products at will into our country, without much at all in the way of barriers, without impediment, without tariff barriers or nontariff barriers. But they impose barriers against us. The reason why flows from the situation we were in at the end of World War II, when we were such an economic juggernaut. Other countries wanted to protect their markets a little bit from the 800-pound gorilla in the world, which was us.

While we are still a strong and vibrant nation, we no longer dominate world markets. We want to make sure we have access to other markets in ways we have not had in recent years in some countries.

I would like to think of one of the roles of government, and one of the major roles of government, is to provide a nurturing environment for job creation and job preservation. That includes a lot of things. That includes

making sure businesses, large and small, have access to the credit; it means that when folks come up with an idea, we have an innovative economy and a lot of technology; when people come up with new technology and new ideas, they go to the Patent Office to file it and they end up getting the patent and they don't end up in years of litigation.

Businesses like predictability, and that is part of the environment we need to provide. We need to provide a workforce where the people can come out of our schools and can read, write, think, do math, and have a good work ethic. We have to have common sense in regulations. Obviously, we need regulations, and we need to consider cost-benefit relations. As we do those regulations, we can get input from all sides.

We need predictable tax policies—tax policies that are progrowth. We also need access to foreign markets. Folks who build products in this country need access to foreign markets. In too many cases, we don't have that. These trade agreements are attempting to change that. Very soon, for that family in Panama who has to pay \$36 for the same amount of drumsticks and thighs that now cost \$10 here, that is going to change. We are going to start exporting and selling cars in Korea. They will still be able to sell theirs here, but we will sell tens of thousands of cars in Korea in a year or two.

In my State, we used to make a lot of cars. We had a GM plant and a Chrysler plant. They are now gone. But starting next year, a new plant will start up, and they will make some of the most beautiful cars in the world. Some are already being made, called the Karma. It gets about 70 miles per gallon. It is a drop-dead beautiful vehicle. Starting late next year, they will be making it a less-expensive car. We want to make sure they use our Port of Wilmington to ship those cars around the world. It would be nice to sell some of those in Korea or in Latin America and South America, as well as in Europe.

For my State, 80 percent of our agricultural industry, believe it or not, is chickens. I don't know what it is like in Iowa or in Florida or New York, but 80 percent of ours is chickens. Agriculture is one of the top three sectors of our State's economy—80 percent chickens. One out of every five chickens we raise in the Delmarva Peninsula is exported to another country. This is not chickenfeed; this is a big deal for us in Delaware.

This is important for our ability to export vehicles, our ability to export chemicals, plastics, poultry, and the ability for us to export some of our services—the work we do in financial services with banking or insurance. A lot of those companies would like to be able to do business in Korea or Latin America. This legislation will enable them to do that.

I think a lot of people will vote for the agreements today with Panama and with South Korea. Even some of

the labor unions—the UAW and others—support the South Korea agreement. There is still skepticism and concern, understandably, regarding the agreement with Colombia. As everybody in the Chamber knows, and a lot of people in this country know, for years, labor leaders, organizers have been the target of assassinations in Colombia. According to the Colombians, in 2001, I believe there were about 205 assassinations in that 1 year alone in Colombia. The numbers are a little bit confusing because that includes folks who are not necessarily labor organizers but who are educators and maybe members of labor unions—205 people in 1 year. Can you imagine in this country if 205 labor leaders, organizers, and teachers were murdered in a year? That is a much smaller country than ours. The numbers have come down.

In one of our conversations yesterday with some labor unions in Delaware, one shared the latest number reported by the Colombian Government; I think it was 22 in the early part of this month. That is 22 too many. About half those folks killed were teachers who have been targeted by criminal elements and drug folks, drug gangs, because of the threat that teachers and educators pose to the ability of the drug folks to destabilize that country. So they are targets as well.

The Colombian Government has provided almost like a witness protection service down there, but it is somewhat different. They don't take people and change their identities and move them and hide them. They actually provide extra protection for folks who are believed to be at risk. That caused a reduction of almost 90 percent in the assassinations over the last decade. Even if it is just one or two, we know that is too many.

The question for us is, Do we ignore the progress or do we say, no, we are not going to ratify a free-trade agreement with Colombia until there are no assassinations? We have a saying: Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. That may trivialize this particular argument, and I would not suggest that is the standard we should use. But substantial progress has been made. We have embedded in that trade agreement environmental provisions, labor provisions, that are now part of the agreement. We have done the same with Panama and Korea. There is an implementation schedule that the government is expected to follow and has been followed. It has been certified by the President. They are taking the steps they are supposed to be taking in order to further reduce the level of violence. Overall, rather extraordinary progress has been made in Colombia.

A friend of mine who works there in the Embassy described to me the difference is between night and day.

It wasn't all that long ago when gunmen rounded up 11 supreme court justices in Colombia and took them into a room and shot them all dead. We know

it is not just teachers or labor leaders who are being targeted for assassination and have been targeted but people at the highest levels of that country's government—government leaders, people who run for office, officeholders, law enforcement officers, judges, all kinds of people.

For the most part, it has changed. It is a lot better. The question is, Do we reward the improvement made or do we say, no, that is not enough, come back when you are pristine clean, pristine pure? For me, it is one I wrestled with and others have as well. I think, in this case, we can vote with our hopes, and our hope and expectation is that this progress has been realized and will continue.

There is one last thing I wish to mention before I finish.

Any number of folks have said to me: You know, NAFTA didn't help us all that much—Mexico and Canada—and so how do we know these trade agreements will help us? We learned some things from NAFTA. One of the things we learned is if we have environmental concerns, we ought to embed in the agreement the rest of those environmental concerns—actually addressing them in the treaty. We have done that with all these nations. We have done the same thing with respect to labor provisions. They are actually embedded in the agreement.

The other thing I have said to folks who are concerned this isn't in our best interest and it will not help us economically, I don't agree with that. But think about this. To say this is not going to help us is counterintuitive. Think about it. We allow these countries to sell their goods and services in our country without impediment. We don't keep them out. We don't impose, for the most part, tariff or nontariff barriers. But if we want to sell our goods and services there, they impose these barriers—tariff or nontariff barriers. Under a free-trade agreement, the barriers that others put up to keep our goods and services out pretty much go away and in some cases pretty fast.

It is hard for me to say: Well, if we are going to let them ship their goods and services to us—continue to—and they are going to eliminate their tariff and nontariff barriers, why shouldn't we do better? We will do better. We make great chicken, we build great cars, have great chemical products, and excellent financial services. Those products will sell and we will be able to grow our economy.

The last problem is this. For us to come out of this recession—and we have come out of the recession officially, but there is still a lot of hurt and pain all over the place, including in my own State, but for us to come out of it, we need to grow the economy—we need to grow the economy—and we need to grow it across the world. We make any number of products in this country. Some are products—cars, chickens, chemicals, plastics—and others are services. They are

as good as any in the world. We want to make sure we have access to sell them anywhere in the world, including these three countries. Their consumers will be better off and our producers and our businesses will be better off. That is why I am happy to support these agreements.

The last thing I want to do is to acknowledge the excellent leadership Senator BAUCUS has provided for us. Senator GRASSLEY is on the floor, and I know these are issues he cares a lot about. The partnership he and Senator BAUCUS have had over the years is a model for the Senate.

They are not on the floor now, but I also want to mention Senator BLUNT and Senator PORTMAN, two of our Republican colleagues, who joined with me to make sure at the end of the day we didn't just vote for three free-trade agreements but we also had the opportunity to vote and put in place trade adjustment assistance to ensure those workers in this country who might be negatively affected or displaced would have the opportunity to get unemployment compensation and have the opportunity to get job training so they will be treated fairly as well. It is the personification of the Golden Rule: Treat other people the way we want to be treated.

So we have succeeded in not just passing three free-trade agreements, which I think will help our economy overall, but we will also look out for the people who might be adversely affected. So I want to thank Senator GRASSLEY and the other Republicans who provided the support to make that happen too. And again to Senator BAUCUS: A job well done.

Madam President, I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor to anyone else who is here and wants to speak at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Well, can you believe it, we are finally here. After several years of waiting for these trade agreements to come to the Congress, it looks as though we are going to be able to vote on them, pass them, and send them to the President for his signature, and they will become law.

Quite frankly, I thought soon after May 10, 2007, we would be voting on the Colombia trade agreement because President Bush was anxious to send it to the Hill. But the Democrats took over the Congress after the 2006 election, and the way it was negotiated by the Bush administration wasn't good enough. There wasn't enough negotiation to go far enough on labor and environment, so the new Democratic-controlled Congress said we have to do more on those negotiations for environment and labor.

So more was renegotiated, and on May 10, 2007, there was a news conference announcing a bipartisan result between the Bush administration and the Democratic Congress on an agreement with Colombia on better environment and labor issues that had been

reached. So a bipartisan agreement, particularly when you have a Democratic Congress and a Republican President, you would have expected that right away we would be having at least Colombia up here. At that time, South Korea wasn't completely negotiated. But the other party turned into a protectionist party and so nothing has happened until now. The goalposts have been moved several times, but the free trade reality of creating jobs has come back to the other political party. So I am glad we are here at last, even though it may be 4 years late. We are doing the right thing, even though it is being done later than it should have been done.

Everybody knows that every day in this Congress, and rightly so, with 9.1 percent unemployment, the topic is jobs. And that is as it should be. The question gets asked a lot: What policies can we implement here in the Congress to create jobs or at least to encourage jobs. With over 9 percent unemployment in this country, we should, in fact, be talking about how to have an environment that creates jobs, and freeing up trade is one of the best ways to create jobs. These aren't just creating jobs, these are good-paying jobs. On average, jobs related to international trade pay 15 percent above the national average.

The truth is for years we have known one clear and simple way to create jobs and stimulate growth in our economy, and that is international trade. The Colombia, South Korea, and Panama trade agreements will create and support thousands of jobs, and I believe even hundreds of thousands of jobs. So we must implement the trade deals reached with Panama, South Korea, and Colombia, and we must do it today, even though it should have been done, in the case of South Korea, a year ago and in the case of Panama and Colombia 3 or 4 years ago.

We entered into these agreements back in 2006 and 2007, and there is no excuse why we have had to wait nearly 5 years—until now—to get to them. Yet congressional Democrats, and later President Obama, continued to move the goalposts, putting up barriers that prevented their consideration and passage until this day. There is no clearer or easier way of creating jobs in the near term, and good jobs lasting for a long period of time, than passing these trade bills and doing it now. Thank God the President has said he would sign them.

According to the National Association of Manufacturers, 100,000 jobs will be created by the implementation of these trade agreements. There are estimates from other sources that suggest the number of jobs may be even higher. The administration—and I believe rightly so—believes that the higher number of jobs being created would be in the few hundred thousand. The Obama administration estimates in the case of the Korea trade agreement alone 70,000 additional jobs for the U.S. workforce will be created.

Not only do these trade agreements expand opportunities for U.S. workers, they also present tremendous opportunities for American agriculture. It is estimated that the Korean agreement could increase the price farmers receive for pigs by \$10 per head. So you see in the case of Delaware, where Senator CARPER says it is good for his poultry industry because that is so dominant there, where larger livestock is so dominant in the Midwest, in my State of Iowa, it is going to be a very good agreement as well.

The Colombian agreement will level the playing field for U.S. corn farmers so they can begin to reclaim some of the market share they lost due to high tariffs for our products going down there. We have lost markets not just because of the high tariffs but because Colombia, in the last 5 years, has reached agreements with other countries that have allowed those countries, through their agricultural products—particularly grain—to take over the share of the Colombian market that American agriculture previously had.

The agreement with the country of Panama will bring about better opportunities for a variety of agricultural products, including beef, poultry, and pork, to name a few.

We have been waiting a long time to get to this point, and so, as I have said two or three times, because I am satisfied we are going to get the job done, I am eager to cast my vote in support of all three agreements. But as the finish line nears on these agreements, the American people should be asking why President Obama has dragged his feet on these agreements for so long. There has been a lot of wasted time and tax dollars with stimulus programs that were supposed to create jobs but did not produce any measurable amount of jobs; whereas, if these agreements had been in place, these jobs we are talking about creating from this day forward would probably have already been created. The stimulus plan failed to do what President Obama promised Americans, but I am telling you these trade agreements will do what President Obama promises the American people, they will do in the way of creating jobs.

Of course, the President wants to try it again with yet another costly stimulus program, as we were debating yesterday. We don't need more government spending to create jobs. We know that doesn't work. What we need to do is create an environment so the private sector will create jobs. We know what works, and these agreements are part of what works to create jobs. We need to continue opening markets for U.S. exports, and that is what these agreements will do. We need to pass these trade agreements and do it now. American workers need them now and the unemployed need the new jobs that will be created as a result of these agreements.

But for the economic future of our country, we should not stop with these

three trade agreements. The President can provide certainty to businesses, farmers, and workers by renewing his commitment to expanding trade opportunities. The best way to do that is to ask Congress to renew his authority to negotiate free-trade agreements through a long-used cooperative process between the Congress and the executive branch of government, involving the Congress giving the President what is called trade promotion authority so he can work further agreements.

In January of 2010, the President said he wanted to double exports by 2015, and that was welcome news. But actions speak louder than words, Mr. President. The President has repeatedly delayed these trade deals. He has routinely dodged the question of when he would request authority for trade promotion to negotiate new agreements, and he has not laid out a clear strategic plan for in fact reaching the trade goals he expressed at the beginning of 2010. We are now nearly 2 years further down the road from that discussion he had.

While it may be tough to reach the goals of doubling exports by 2015, we can still push on toward that goal, as we should. The more we do to open new markets and then get out of the way, the more we will help our struggling economy. There are three steps to continue helping U.S. businesses, farmers, and most of all the workers of America—particularly the unemployed workers of America. First, we need to pass these three trade agreements with no more political gamesmanship by this administration, and I think we are over that hurdle. Secondly, Congress should pass trade promotion authority so the administration can responsibly seek opportunities for greater market access for U.S. products. Finally, the administration must make it a top priority to actually seek more opportunities for opening foreign markets for our products.

We live in a global economy. We once led the way in forming trade agreements and expanding trade relationships. The rest of the world waited for the United States to take the first step.

In recent years, we have lost our way. The rest of the world isn't going to wait on the United States as they did for the last 60 years. That is why we have lost market share in Colombia that I just spoke about as one example.

We need to reestablish our position as a world leader in opening and expanding markets. Passing these trade agreements is crucial and long overdue, but it is a necessary first step. The next step is for the President to seek trade promotion authority and get back in the game leading the rest of the world.

I urge my colleagues to help U.S. businesses, farmers, our workers, and, most importantly, our unemployed workers by voting in support of the Panama, Colombia, and South Korea trade agreements.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. I compliment my colleague for his kind and good words on the floor. He is a great leader in the Senate, and the Senator from Iowa is one of the truly great people I have met.

Today, we are finally considering our free-trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. It has been 9 long years since the authority to negotiate these trade agreements was passed by Congress, and it has been over 4 years, as the distinguished Senator from Iowa said, since each of these agreements was signed.

After a burst of international economic engagement under President Bush, we witnessed nothing but passive indifference by the 111th Democrat-led Congress and then, in more recent years, by the Obama administration.

While purporting to support trade and seemingly acknowledging its benefits, the current administration took little concrete action to advance these or any trade agreements for years. In fact, the opposite was true. Instead of devising ways to gain their approval, President Obama used his time to create excuses for not supporting any of the three agreements.

Finally, early this year, under relentless political pressure from Congress and from American businesses and farmers who will benefit from these agreements, the administration's excuses slowly melted away. Then, with every reasonable excuse gone and with bipartisan support for passing the agreements building and the end in sight, President Obama threw another obstacle in the path of their consideration. This time he made new demands for more spending on domestic worker retraining programs. Let's consider that at a time when virtually every government spending program faces intense scrutiny and many programs are being cut, this administration demanded more spending for a program of dubious value and with an unproven track record. In doing so, the President put his thirst for more spending ahead of the interests of the broader American economy that would benefit from these agreements entering into force, and he risked the tens of thousands of jobs his own administration insists these agreements will create. His reckless demands ground any progress we had achieved to pass the agreements to a halt. Accordingly, it took months for Congress to unravel this substantive and procedural Gordian knot of the President's own making. Meanwhile, U.S. workers continued to lose ground as our foreign competitors completed agreements to benefit their workers at our expense.

With today's vote, our Nation can hopefully begin to awaken from its trade stupor and confront the opportunities and challenges the world economy offers once again. Frankly, I am baffled by this administration's dis-

regard for trade. They should know better. Our country benefits from free-trade agreements, and the reason is simple: The tariffs of our trading partners are generally significantly higher than are those of the United States. Free-trade agreements even the playing field for U.S. exporters by lowering the tariffs of the United States and our trading partners to the same level of zero.

For those who say they demand fair trade, it is hard for me to conceive of fairer trade than that—a level playing field where our products and services enjoy the same access and protections that foreign goods and services enjoy here in the United States. By leveling the playing field, free-trade agreements promote U.S. exports. Indeed, U.S. exports to our free-trade-agreement countries increased at a faster rate than U.S. exports to the rest of the world from 2009 to 2010. Moreover, in 2010, U.S. exports to our free-trade partner countries constituted 41 percent of all U.S. exports. Yet the United States has free-trade agreements with only 17 countries, and that is out of the 234 countries on which the U.S. Department of Commerce collects trade data. So our exports to our free-trade-agreement partners—just 17 countries—come close to dominating U.S. exports.

Let's look at this another way. The combined population of our free trade agreement partner countries is only about 310 million, while the world population is approximately 7 billion. So almost half of U.S. exports go to the less than 5 percent of the world's population that lives in countries with which we have free trade agreements. To me, it is clear that if we really want to double exports over the next 5 years, among the best tools available to us are our free trade agreements.

The export numbers under our recent free trade agreements certainly bear this out. Staff economists at the U.S. International Trade Commission share these observations on the benefits of the recent free trade agreements. They wrote last month that "the United States has a significant and sustained trade surplus with recent FTA partners." In an analysis of recent free trade agreements that excluded oil trade, these economists noted that the U.S. trade surplus with these recent free trade agreement partners grew from \$1.7 billion in 2005 to \$16.7 billion in 2010, and they stated that this expanded trade surplus was driven mainly by a \$24.5 billion increase in U.S. exports to those countries. During this same period, U.S. non-oil exports to the recent FTA partner countries increased by 23 percent, while non-oil imports from those countries grew by only 3 percent.

So the facts are clear that the recently implemented U.S. free trade agreements have benefited the United States. There is little doubt that the pending U.S. free trade agreements will do the same. As with existing U.S. free trade agreements, the free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and

South Korea will level the playing field for U.S. exporters. They will eliminate the significant disparity between tariffs imposed by Colombia, Panama, and South Korea on imports from the United States and tariffs that the United States applies on imports from those countries.

According to the U.S. International Trade Commission, U.S. exports to these countries may increase by up to \$12 billion following implementation of these agreements. The U.S. International Trade Commission also estimates that these agreements, once implemented, could expand the U.S. GDP by over \$14 billion.

Let's take a moment to review the unique benefits of each of these agreements. The South Korea FTA is in many ways the gold standard for trade agreements. South Korea's economy is worth over \$1 trillion, and this agreement enables American workers and companies to take advantage of it.

The FTA incorporates state of the art intellectual property rights protections, significantly expands services sector market access, opens a large agriculture market, and offers new market access for American manufacturers. It adopts the most advanced regulatory, non-tariff barrier, and investment provisions of any FTA thus far and champions the rule of law which is so critical to an effective and fair rules-based trading relationship.

For my home State of Utah, South Korea is already an impressive market. South Korea imported more than \$294 million of goods from Utah in 2009 alone. Implementation of the agreement will help boost Utah's exports even more, as over two-thirds of our exports to Korea will become duty-free immediately.

The sectors that will immediately benefit from the agreement's tariff cuts reflect Utah's economy, including computers and electronics, metals and ores, machinery, agriculture, and services.

But the benefits of this agreement for Utah go far beyond just reducing tariffs. By adopting the strongest intellectual property rights, regulatory reforms, investment protections, and transparency provisions, the South Korea FTA will ensure that our companies, farmers, and workers realize the full potential of the South Korean market. By protecting the ideas of America's entrepreneurs and providing a level playing field, U.S. workers and job creators stand to benefit significantly from implementation of this agreement.

Panama plays a unique and important role in international trade. The construction of the Panama Canal bridged East and West, allowing us to link economies across the globe. Today, Panama is building towards an even more interconnected future as it engages in an ambitious \$5.25 billion construction project to broaden and deepen the canal. The Panama FTA will provide our companies and work-

ers with access to this and other government procurement projects.

Panama is one of the fastest growing economies in Latin America, having experienced a decade of economic growth that has at times reached double digits. Panama's GDP is expected to more than double by 2020. Passing this agreement will provide significant new access for U.S. companies and workers to this growing market.

Bear in mind that today, 98 percent of Panama's goods enter the U.S. duty free. Our trade agreement turns this into a two-way street, ensuring that 87 percent of U.S. goods will enter Panama duty free immediately once we get this agreement implemented.

Panama is also one of the world's financial hubs and in recent years has taken giant leaps to increase its fiscal transparency. This financial industry underpins a services market worth over \$20 billion. Our services firms will have guaranteed access to this market once we the FTA enters into force. Our farmers and ranchers will gain additional market access through tariff reductions and a fair and transparent, science-based regulatory environment which will enable them to sell more products to Panama's growing consumer class. The agreement will foster greater customs transparency, which will benefit both exporters and importers, including Utah companies who currently export almost \$4.5 million per year in goods to Panama.

The Colombia agreement will also help our exporters. Our agreement with Colombia will transform a one-way preferential trade relationship into a two-way street, giving U.S. exporters fair access to a large and growing consumer market. Colombia's economy is the third largest in Central and South America. Colombia is also the third largest recipient of U.S. exports in Latin America. In fact, in 2010 the U.S. sold more products to Colombia—approximately \$12 billion—than to Russia, Spain, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Chile, Peru, Indonesia, South Africa, Thailand, and the Philippines.

The agreement will affect the lives of farmers and workers across the United States in a positive way. A good example of the agreement's positive effects can be found in my home State of Utah where workers at AC Med, a Salt Lake City company that exports hospital beds to Colombia, will see tariffs of 20 percent eliminated immediately upon implementation of this agreement.

Implementation of this agreement will result in over 80 percent of U.S. exports of consumer and industrial products to Colombia becoming duty free immediately, with the remaining tariffs being phased out over 10 years.

The agreement will also provide significant new access to Colombia's \$134 billion services market, will require the use of fair and transparent procurement procedures protecting United States companies in Colombia against discriminatory or unlawful treatment, protect intellectual property rights,

and increase access for U.S. service providers, telecommunication companies, and agricultural exporters.

There are a number of reasons beyond the economic benefits to the United States economy to support our trade agreement with Colombia in particular. Colombia is a strategic ally of the United States. In a part of the world where the United States has too often lacked friends, Colombia is a sound and steadfast ally. In fact, I can think of no other countries in South America with which the United States has closer, stronger, and more positive relations.

While Colombia has a long democratic tradition, undemocratic forces have tried over the years to topple its government. Determined to keep these armed entities from destroying their democracy, Colombians fought for decades against these forces. Far too many brave men and women lost their lives and their livelihoods in this struggle.

The United States stood by the side of these Colombians, devoting significant resources in the fight against drug traffickers and narco-terrorists through Plan Colombia. The accomplishments of Plan Colombia have been significant, but there is more work to be done. Continued economic growth will be key to helping Colombia further solidify its democratic gains and strengthen the rule of law. This FTA can contribute to both our economies while strengthening democracy in Colombia and helping our friends.

Each of these agreements will enhance our economic competitiveness and provide new opportunities for our exporters. Our Nation has been denied the benefits of these agreements for long enough. As President Obama himself has said, it is time to put country before party, and support each of these important trade agreements. I urge all my colleagues to vote for each of these agreements.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

IRANIAN BOMBING PLOT

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, I wish to speak on the trade bills, but first I would like to comment on the fact, as the Senator from Utah has reminded us, of the sacrifice a lot of young Americans are enduring.

One of the more difficult tasks that I have is to sign the letters of condolence to the families on the loss of one of their members anywhere in the world having to do with the armed services.

I might say that another major part of our protection of our national security is the young men and women we do not hear about, the men and women of the intelligence community all across the globe who likewise are protecting our national security interests, many times in direct coordination with the U.S. military. From time to time, we have casualties in the intelligence community as well.

I just want to again express my profound thanks and gratitude to those across the globe who are protecting the national security interests of our blessed country.

It is interesting because we just learned of a plot that was a threat to our security interests. Can you believe—a plot to assassinate a diplomat here in our Capital City of Washington; a plot that has intrigue like a B novel, that brings in the Mexican drug cartels; a plot that, according to the Attorney General, has been hatched by high levels of the Iranian Government. Now, the question is, who is in control in the Iranian Government? Is it the Supreme Leader? Is it the President, Ahmadi-Nejad? Is it what this plot was traced to, which is one arm of their governmental apparatus, the Revolutionary Guard, the Quds Force? It doesn't seem that Iran has its act together.

Even though we hear the protestations by the Iranian Ambassador at the United Nations that this is all a fabricated lie, this perpetrator has already confessed. According to the news reports, they are saying this plot included bomb attacks, plotting on the Saudi and Israeli Embassies here in Washington, and that is all here in our National Capital. It was, according to the Attorney General, conceived, sponsored, and directed from Iran. This is obviously a flagrant violation of international law.

An FBI informant, in the transcript the Justice Department released yesterday, asked the alleged plotter whether he was worried about innocent people being killed by a bombing in a restaurant where the supposed plot was to have taken place, where the Saudi Ambassador was going to be dining. In a reference to his Iranian superiors, this bomber said, "They want that guy done" even if "a hundred go with him." The people of the United States have every reason to be outraged, to view this plot as an outright attempt to assault our Nation and our allies. I appreciate the Secretary of State calling for tougher sanctions. I want to hear what the administration is going to do, to make it very clear that these kinds of actions are not going to be tolerated.

I thank, again, the intelligence community, which is how I started my comments. I thank the intelligence community for what they are doing around planet Earth, day in and day out, gathering the information that protects us.

I want to comment on the matter at hand, the trade bills. I thank the chairman and the ranking member for their hard work in bringing to the table and shepherding these trade agreements through the Finance Committee and now here to the Senate. I came here to talk about what is good about these agreements and other people are coming here to talk about what is good, but all you hear is people want to blame the administration for some-

thing. Why don't we say something good?

Not only are these agreements with South Korea, Colombia, and Panama critical to the U.S. economy, they are certainly critical to the economy of my State of Florida, and they send an important signal that the United States is not going to turn its back on economic engagement. These trade agreements are creating a level playing field for American companies by removing foreign barriers to U.S. exports and U.S. investment. And, by the way, some of us would not have let these trade agreements go forward unless there had been also the passage of the trade adjustment assistance, which is assistance for workers who might be displaced as a result of the trade bills, especially with regard to retraining.

The bottom line of these trade bills, then, means real jobs for struggling American workers. If there is any doubt with regard to an economy such as Florida's, there is no question that trade with Colombia, trade with Panama, trade in our agricultural sector with South Korea, is in the interests of my State. But this is also in the interests of the economy of the United States.

The U.S. International Trade Commission estimates American economic output will grow more from the U.S.-Korea agreement than from the last nine trade agreements of the United States combined; just from this one agreement with Korea, more economic output than the last nine agreements combined. The administration has taken extra steps to obtain these labor protections I talked about and further labor protections in the agreement with Colombia and the necessary tax transparency in the agreement with Panama. There is no question that free trade, if it is done right, creates jobs and opportunities. My State, Florida, is the launching point, the gateway to Latin America. Thousands of jobs in Florida depend on maintaining a vibrant commerce in the economic relations with our trading partners to the south. If we fail to move these agreements with Colombia and Panama, we are going to run the risk of losing these jobs.

I often say why does Florida reflect the Nation in a lot of our political mood? It is because the country has moved to Florida. But what is also reflective of Florida, Florida is increasingly a reflection of the Western Hemisphere because of all our ties into Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Under these agreements we are going to pass, emerging industries in Florida, such as aerospace, will be able to increase sales abroad while we are going to be able to hire more people here at home. In the agricultural sector, our ranchers, our farmers, our growers are going to significantly benefit from these agreements. Korea's 54-percent tariff on certain citrus products is going to be eliminated immediately or

reduced to zero over 5 years. Do you know who that helps? It helps a specialty section of citrus called the Indian River region, the region this Senator grew up in, on the banks of the Indian River. The delicacy fruit of the world comes from the Indian River region. They are a huge exporter of fresh grapefruit, and especially that grapefruit going into Korea as a result of this agreement is going to be helpful.

The changes will create new export opportunities for the entire citrus industry and the tariffs on Florida beef exports to Korea will also come down. A lot of people do not know—the Presiding Officer being from New York, people they do not know that New York is a great agriculture State. A lot of folks do not know that Florida is not only how they would identify it—citrus—but it is a huge agriculture State. A lot of people do not realize how much the beef industry, the ranches this Senator grew up on, are so much a part of our economy, and among the 50 States Florida is a leader among beef ranches. This is all going to benefit as a result of this trade agreement with Korea.

The Colombia and Panama agreements include important protections to prevent Brazil, a major producer of orange juice, from shipping orange juice through these other countries to the United States.

These trading agreements are important for strategic reasons as well. Obviously Colombia is a key ally in the region. You have to give credit where credit is due to the Colombian Government, the previous government of President Uribe and the present government, for the close working relationship with the U.S. military, as well as our intelligence community. Give credit where credit is due, that the Government of Colombia pulled off that ruse that helped us bring our three American hostages, who were held by the FARC for years, out of the jungles. South Korea and Panama are strategic partners and share regional interests in security and economic stability.

With all of these trading partners, we are bound by our commitment to freedom and the rule of law, and these trade agreements are certainly going to help us solidify our converging aspirations.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ROBERTS. Madam President, it is my understanding we are in morning business and I am allowed 10 minutes; is that correct?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is no restriction on floor time.

Mr. ROBERTS. Marvelous. Before the Senator from Florida leaves, let me say, from the banks of the Indian River to the prairies of Kansas and Dodge City, I know many people do not quite grasp the fact that there are a lot of cowboys in Florida. Obviously we have a lot of cowboys in Dodge City. From the wheat we want to export to Colombia, despite their trade agreements

with other countries, and you want to export citrus, beef—the same kind of thing—it just shows you from Kansas to Florida, we have similar interests. I thank the Senator for his comments and for his comments yesterday in the markup in the Finance Committee, and for his support. A lot of my remarks will be duplicative of his. That shows you, in regard to Florida and Kansas, we have a very strong mutual interest.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. ROBERTS. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. And also in a bipartisan way that we are supporting this. Isn't that a wonderful term to suddenly throw around, "bipartisanship," where we can come together, not as partisans, not as ideologists, but in the best interests of the country?

Mr. ROBERTS. I share the Senator's views, and I am very hopeful this will not be the last trade agreement we see. I, again, thank him for his comments and his work.

Madam President, some of my remarks will be duplicative of those of Senator HATCH and those of the Senator from Florida, as I have indicated, but on behalf of our Nation's farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers, service providers, I rise today to add my voice to the chorus of strong support for passing the pending trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and Korea.

I will be candid with you. I am not trying to be a "bad news bear" here, but I was not all convinced this day would ever come. But after learning that the President was sending the trade agreements to Congress, I think the word I thought of in my head was "finally," maybe five "finallys," because it has been 5 years that the U.S. trade agenda has been put on hold and frankly was hostage to demands by certain environmental groups, labor groups, and a rewrite of the trade adjustment assistance. But yesterday under the perseverance of the chairman, Senator BAUCUS, and others on the committee, finally the Senate Finance Committee did pass the trade agreements.

We had a markup. It was amidst protesters. It was not a unique situation, but one that the chairman handled very deftly. I call to the attention of Members in regard to their interests in the trade agreements, if they have any possible concerns, read the remarks by Senator HATCH and by the chairman, by Senator CRAPO, Senator WYDEN, and Senator KERRY—more especially Senator WYDEN. He got a little static from the audience, undeservedly.

The good news is, the pending trade agreements add up to \$13 billion in additional exports and estimated 250,000 jobs.

A few big picture highlights: Right now, Korea imposes on average a 54-percent tariff for ag products. Upon implementation, two-thirds of current tariffs are immediately eliminated,

with most zeroing out after a decade. For beef producers—and that is a big thing for Kansas—that means the 40-percent tariff on beef products will be phased out over 15 years. Around 75 percent of the ag and non-ag exports entering Colombia will be duty free upon implementation of the agreement. Duties on many other tariff lines will be phased out over a 5- to 10-year period.

For Panama, while reducing import duties is important, the expansion of the Panama Canal is not only an important project for U.S. bidders, it is geographically key for international commerce and transportation and security for the region.

But from the agricultural perspective, just for the aggies, the three pending trade agreements represent \$2.5 billion upon full implementation; in regard to exports, more than 22,000 jobs. The Kansas Farm Bureau estimates the three agreements in total are expected to increase direct exports by \$130 million for Kansas agricultural producers and an additional 1,150 jobs.

Finally, these trade agreements will help put American workers and exporters on a level playing field with our competitors and hopefully—a tough job—regain lost market share.

Let me emphasize that in the case of two of these agreements, Panama and Colombia, under normal conditions their exports already have duty-free access to the U.S. market. The pending agreements merely create a two-way trade and allow U.S. exporters the same treatment we already grant their countries. It makes one wonder what all the fuss was about. The 5-year fuss and delay hurt us, not them. That is the point I think everybody should finally discern.

Yet for 5 years, 3 years under this administration, the goalposts continued to shift and action was delayed indefinitely—2 years under the previous administration, basically with objections by the House of Representatives. As a consequence, U.S. producers and exporters lost market share to our competitors.

Let me give an example. Over the past 2 years, U.S. wheat producers have already lost market share to Argentina, which receives preferential trade treatment based on a regional trade agreement. In just 2 years, the U.S. share of the Colombian wheat market dropped by 30 percent. Including corn and soybeans, the lost market share jumps to 57 percent.

In addition, the largest food processor in Colombia—Nutresa—announced shortly after the Canada-Colombia trade agreement went into effect that they were sourcing all of their wheat purchases from Canada, accounting for half of all wheat imports. Previously, U.S. wheat growers were the largest suppliers of wheat in Colombia.

In July, the Korea-European Union trade agreement—not U.S. agreement, European Union agreement—went into

effect, and within the first month, according to Korean Customs, European Union exports are up 34 percent. That is market share going to the European Union, not the United States. Notably, aerospace equipment increased a whopping 1,693 percent. We can see where that is going. Kansas is a major player in the aviation sector. We exported \$2.7 billion in transportation equipment last year. Considering the European Union agreement, we can see what happens with lost market share.

Finally, with regard to the United States and future trade and trade in general, the United States must be trusted to stand by its word. Trust in our word in trade means everything. The dithering on these trade agreements has not been lost on our trading partners or the world at large. It is just not economic growth and job creation we have gambled with. All the back and forth and increased demands on our part calls into question our integrity. Is the United States a dependable partner and ally?

As the former chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, I am quite familiar with who is a friend to the United States and who is not. In the 31 countries and 10 territories that make up the U.S. Southern Command, there is a growing sense of anti-Americanism. Venezuela's President, Hugo Chavez, is a perfect example.

A decade ago, Colombia was essentially a failed state suffering from a war waged between the guerilla groups and the paramilitary groups, the FARC and the ELN. Much has changed over 10 years under the leadership of then-President Uribe and continued by President Santos—an amazing job.

U.S. support during this time has helped establish a firm relationship and form a key ally in an increasingly hostile area. So strengthening our economic relationship just makes sense. The unjustified delay on our part is not only embarrassing, it has potentially damaged our credibility, in my view.

As Kansans and the rest of our Nation continue the slow and bumpy climb out of these tough economic times, we must do all we can to foster economic growth. Opening foreign markets to U.S. goods, services, and agriculture is an obvious and long overdue part of the solution. But we can't stop with passing these three trade agreements, pat ourselves on the back, and call it a day. I assure my colleagues that our foreign competitors are not stopping. In fact, it has been reported that there are approximately 100 trade agreements being negotiated right now, give or take, that do not include the United States—100.

We, the United States, are negotiating one, initiated in the waning days of the Bush administration—the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP. The TPP provides critical access to the ever-growing Asia-Pacific region and has the potential to include other countries later in the future.

While negotiations continue, there will soon come a point when talks will

stall because the U.S. negotiators' hands are tied without the protection of trade promotion authority or fast track, as some refer to it. Without TPA, negotiating countries will have little reason to negotiate much less make any difficult concessions until they know the United States is serious. Fast track provides the substance to these talks.

So why is TPA not a priority? I am concerned that as the administration quietly defers on seeking trade promotion authority, negotiators will be unable to negotiate, and trade will take a back seat once again. The signal may well be—and I hope this is not true—that these trade agreements will be the last under the current administration.

Now, let me get off the “Bad News Bears” stuff and the stubborn facts and the 5-year delay. Let me give credit to the President for finally—yes, finally—sending these trade agreements to Congress. But let's not become pacified with the long overdue action. In order to stay competitive with our foreign partners, we need to stay in the game. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I will speak for up to 10 minutes, but I would first defer to the Senator from Michigan for a unanimous consent agreement.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank the Senator from Louisiana. I ask unanimous consent that immediately after Senator VITTER has completed his statement I be recognized for up to 30 minutes, and that I may yield time during that 30-minute period to Senators on this side as we control the 30 minutes.

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

The Senator from Louisiana.

ENERGY

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, today is the 1-year anniversary of President Obama and Secretary of Interior Salazar finally lifting the formal moratorium on drilling in the Gulf of Mexico following the BP disaster. But simply lifting the moratorium did not solve the problem. I return to the Senate floor today to again say that still, a year later, that problem is not solved because there is a continuing permit logjam.

It started with a de facto moratorium. Now there has just been a trickle of permits, and there is a continuing permit logjam that has dramatically shut down and slowed energy activity in the Gulf of Mexico. That must change.

Of course, this is vitally important for my State of Louisiana and the livelihoods of tens of thousands of my citizens. That must change for the good of the country as well, for our economic well-being and to increase our revenues to address deficit and debt.

As we talk about jobs and various jobs bills and jobs proposals, we must focus on the domestic energy sector, and we must change the situation. We must reverse this virtual shutdown of the gulf for the good of the country, and I hope we do that.

To that end, I joined Congressman JEFF LANDRY yesterday in a meeting with Obama Director Michael Bromwich and other high-ranking administration officials who have to do with this very permitting and leasing process. We wanted to sit down with these officials in the Obama administration to again make this very point. The formal moratorium was lifted a year ago, but the problem persists, and we need to do better. We need to issue permits at a much more healthy pace. We need to get that important domestic energy activity back up and running in the Gulf of Mexico.

Recently, there was an independent study by HIS Global Insight which put some hard numbers on this situation. That study said leasing in the Gulf of Mexico is down about 65 percent from pre-formal moratorium levels. It also pointed out that the waiting line of people and companies to get permits has almost doubled. It has increased 90 percent.

So what does that mean? That means far less activity in the gulf, far less energy activity for the country, and far fewer jobs—jobs we need now more than ever in this horrible economy.

Let me give some other relevant numbers. As of the end of September—just a few weeks ago—there were 21 floating rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, of which about 18 are currently drilling wells. That compares, pre-moratorium, to 33 floating rigs with 29 drilling wells at that time. That is a 37-percent drop in both the number of rigs and those drilling.

Since the moratorium began, 11 rigs have left the Gulf of Mexico. Only one of these has returned. In addition, three more are sitting idle. Seven of these rigs have left to go to African countries, including Egypt, Nigeria, Liberia, and the Republic of Congo. Three have gone to South America, mostly to Brazil and French Guiana; and the remaining rig was mobilized to Vietnam. This all translates to about 60 wells lost based on the original contract terms for these rigs.

The loss of these rigs isn't just loss of equipment; it is loss of important energy and economic activity, and it is loss of jobs. It is lost spending of \$6.3 billion and an annual loss of direct employment of 11,500 jobs over just 2 years. When we look at indirect employment, it is a multiplier that brings that lost job figure to way more than that.

Again, it started with the formal moratorium. The formal moratorium was lifted 1 year ago today, but the problem persists because there was a de facto moratorium, and there is still a permit logjam.

Another example of this enormous problem isn't just permitting. Another

example is lease activity by the administration. Again, that is completely separate and apart from permitting. But the dramatic decline in lease sales, lease activity that the administration is putting out, shows the same problem mindset. What do I mean?

Well, in the last fiscal year, the administration had no new lease activity—zero, nothing, nada. What that means is—just a few years ago the income to the Federal Government from lease sales was almost \$10 billion, and that has fallen like a rock through the floor and is now zero. That is another indicator of a problem mindset in this administration, leading to a dramatic economic slowdown. We need to reverse this. We need to do better for the economy, for jobs, and for that important revenue it brings to the Federal Government which could lower deficit and debt.

So as we talk about the need to create good American jobs, as we also talk about the need to grapple with our deficit and debt situation and dramatically lower deficit and debt, as we talk about the need for revenue to be part of that picture, domestic energy has to be part of the solution, and it can be a big and productive part of the solution to both of those huge problems—the need to create good American jobs and the need to lower deficit and debt. If we aggressively pursue domestic energy production, starting in the gulf, fully reopening the gulf, getting the permit process to a pace at least equal to pre-formal moratorium levels, get lease activity back online, and then expand to other areas of our resources off the Atlantic, Pacific, offshore Alaska—we have enormous resources that are now off-limits to energy production—if we do that, we can grow jobs, we can grow Federal revenue and lessen deficit and debt, and we can help attack both of those major economic problems for the country.

Again, yesterday, I met, along with Congressman LANDRY, with Director Bromwich to make those points, to give specific examples of what we can be doing to go down that path in favor of good American jobs and lowering the deficit and debt. I hope it made a difference. Ultimately, only time will tell. But this needs to be part of our overall economic approach. This needs to be part of our deficit and debt reduction approach, and it can make a major contribution to solving both of these problems.

I hope in a bipartisan way we will do that, and urge that in the Senate, and the administration will break through the negative mindset they have had for several years and do that in an aggressive way. Our country needs it. Our workers need it. We need it as taxpayers to lower the deficit and debt, and this would be a very productive way forward.

Madam President, with that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam 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.

AMERICAN JOBS ACT

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, more than 14 million Americans are without work. The American Jobs Act would help up to 2 million Americans get work or keep their jobs. It would prevent the layoffs of hundreds of thousands of teachers, police, firefighters, and other first responders. The jobs bill would give tax cuts to millions of small businesses. It would give incentives to those businesses to hire new workers. The American Jobs Act would provide a payroll tax cut to millions of American families. It would help our returning veterans find jobs. The American Jobs Act would put thousands of construction workers on the job repairing crumbling schools, building and repairing roads and bridges.

The chief economist for Moody's, Mark Zandi, estimates that this legislation would add 2 percentage points to economic growth and would reduce the unemployment rate by up to 1 full percentage point. Economists surveyed by Bloomberg believe this bill "would help avoid a return to recession." Those are their words. That is what the majority of our economists say from both sides of the aisle, across the political spectrum.

How does it do this? The bill uses ideas that both Democrats and Republicans have supported in the past. It would not add a dime to the Federal deficit, and its provisions are overwhelmingly popular with the American people, according to all of the public opinion polls.

We should be debating this bill. We should be offering amendments, as the majority leader said we would be doing. We should be improving it. We should be preparing to vote on it so millions of American working families can get the relief they need. We should do this so we can demonstrate to our constituents and to the world that we will come together to act in the face of crisis. Yet here we are roadblocked again. Why are we roadblocked? Because our Republican colleagues last night voted not to allow us to even begin to debate legislation that has ideas so many of them have supported in the past.

Senate Republicans are once again walking down the filibuster road. The vote last night was not a vote on the American Jobs Act. Because the filibuster rules of the Senate require 60 votes, Senate Republicans last night were able to prevent the Senate from proceeding to a bill addressing the jobs crisis. We all know the rules of the Senate give the minority the power to stop us from holding this debate, but exercising that power, as they did last night, is profoundly mistaken. What they are doing when they do that is

they are using a filibuster to prevent the Senate from even debating this bill. What that does in turn is elevate partisan interests over the good of the country.

A number of us are going to be speaking today because we are deeply concerned—concerned that Republicans once again have signaled to an anxious and skeptical nation that we cannot address a great challenge of the day. We are deeply concerned that the single most important need in this country—jobs—will not be debated and remedies will not be sought because the Republicans once again are walking down the filibuster road.

If Republicans oppose this bill, which is their right, vote against it. Better yet, if Republicans oppose this approach, for heaven's sake, offer an alternative jobs bill, offer a substitute, an alternative, something where the American public can compare what is in our jobs bill with what Republicans presumably favor. They oppose ours without saying what they favor, except vague references to less regulation. Everybody is in favor of eliminating wasteful regulations, but nobody believes you can do serious deficit reduction or create serious numbers of jobs by just freezing regulation.

By the way, the small business community does not believe that. The surveys which were taken of small businesspeople by their own organizations say the biggest problem small business has is not regulation, and it is not taxes; it is a lack of demand. This bill helps to create demand by putting dollars into the pockets of our workers. There is a tax cut here which is very important to help stimulate that demand.

So what is coming across to the American public loudly and clearly these days is that the Democrats here in the Senate have an alternative. The Republicans are filibustering that alternative without offering one of their own. Now, the majority could seek to break this filibuster by forcing the Republicans to sustain the filibuster and to try to wear them down. That process, however, at this time in this Congress is not a practical approach because it takes weeks or even months to break a filibuster. It is just simply too late in the session for us to practically be able to do that. And, by the way, the American people should not have to wait that long in any event for us to act.

But there is another way to overcome a filibuster. It is not just forcing the filibusterers to filibuster—that is one way to do it; it takes usually months in order to succeed, but it would dramatize where the obstruction is—but the other way to overcome a filibuster is for public opinion to wear down the Republican wall of obstruction. That is probably the only practical path available for overcoming this filibuster at this time of this Congress.

I hope the President will use his bully pulpit to make clear to the

American people that it is the obstructionism of filibustering Republicans that prevents us from taking action on a jobs bill. The President has very effectively gone around the country supporting his jobs bill. I commend him for doing that. But what we need him now to do is to take that bully pulpit, which is unique to the President and to the Presidency, and use that bully pulpit to make it clear to the American people that filibustering Republicans are obstructing us from even taking up a jobs bill.

The majority leader has made it clear that this is open to amendment. If the Republicans have a better idea, they can offer a substitute. But what is going on here now is that, without any alternative of their own, they are preventing us from addressing the major issue of this country.

The Republican leader last night repeatedly asked unanimous consent to send this bill back to the calendar if we did not get 60 votes to proceed. The Republican leader wants this bill to go away. Well, this jobs bill is not going to go away. It should not go away. And the Republican leader is engaging in wishful thinking if he believes that because he and his colleagues on that side of the aisle are filibustering a jobs bill, that means the filibuster is going to succeed and this bill is simply going to be returned to the calendar.

The majority leader has said he is going to try again. Senator REID said specifically he is going to bring this bill back again by using his rights, after he made it clear last night he is going to reconsider this bill. He has the right to do that because of the way in which he voted last night. He voted with the prevailing side at the end in order that he could reconsider this bill—a technical way that he could. He already had expressed his view very strongly supporting cloture, but he also, in order to bring this bill back under the same cloture motion, then filed a motion to reconsider as a Member of the prevailing side at the end, after he switched his vote so he could do so.

I commend the majority leader. I commend him for taking that action. I commend him for signaling to the American people, to the media, to our colleagues on both sides of the aisle that he is going to try again. We are not simply going to fold our tent and go away. The majority leader is going to move to reconsider at a time he believes is appropriate, and then there will be another effort to break a Republican filibuster so we can at least debate this critically important legislation.

Madam President, I am going to read from an analysis on the jobs plan by Mark Zandi that I ask unanimous consent be printed in the RECORD. Mark Zandi is an economist at Moody's.

[From Economy.com, Sept. 9, 2011]

AN ANALYSIS OF THE OBAMA JOBS PLAN

(By Mark Zandi)

President Obama's jobs proposal would help stabilize confidence and keep the U.S. from sliding back into recession.

The plan would add 2 percentage points to GDP growth next year, add 1.9 million jobs, and cut the unemployment rate by a percentage point.

The plan would cost about \$450 billion, about \$250 billion in tax cuts and \$200 billion in spending increases.

Many of the president's proposals are unlikely to pass Congress, but the most important have a chance of winning bipartisan support.

President Obama's much-anticipated jobs plan is a laudable effort to support the struggling economy. The plan would go a long way toward stabilizing confidence, forestalling another recession, and jump-starting a self-sustaining economic expansion. If fully implemented, the Obama jobs plan would increase real GDP growth in 2012 by 2 percentage points, add 1.9 million jobs, and reduce the unemployment rate by a full percentage point, compared with current fiscal policy.

The president's plan includes a wide range of temporary tax cuts and spending increases. Among its widely anticipated provisions are one-year extensions of this year's employee payroll tax holiday and the full expensing of business investment. Surprisingly, the plan would also increase the size of the temporary payroll tax cut and creatively expand it to employers. The president would also help state and local governments pay teacher and first-responder salaries, boost funding for unemployment insurance while meaningfully reforming the UI system, and launch several infrastructure initiatives.

The plan has its drawbacks. It isn't cheap, costing taxpayers an estimated \$450 billion. Of that, approximately \$250 billion takes the form of tax cuts, while another \$200 billion comes through spending increases. The president proposes paying for his plan with additional deficit reduction beginning in fiscal 2014, but he does not explicitly say how this is to be accomplished. The plan also results in weaker growth in 2013, as most of the tax cuts and spending increases are temporary and fade during the year. Presumably the economy will be strong enough to handle it by then, but that is far from certain. Moreover, the plan fails to address the ongoing foreclosure crisis and housing slump, major impediments to the recovery.

In the current political environment, it is less than likely that most of the president's plan will pass Congress. Our current baseline outlook assumes that the payroll tax holiday for employees is extended for only one more year. There is a fighting chance that broader payroll tax cuts for employees and employers could become law, but the odds aren't high enough at this time to change our baseline assumptions.

WHY MORE SUPPORT IS CRITICAL

There are compelling reasons why the Obama administration and Congress should provide more fiscal support to the economy. Most obviously, the U.S. is struggling to avoid recession as confidence flags. To complicate matters, federal fiscal policy is quickly becoming a significant drag on growth; state and local governments are already a weight. The Federal Reserve has resumed easing monetary policy, but with interest rates near zero, the Fed cannot lift the economy by itself. Moreover, with the government's borrowing costs as low as they have ever been and no indication that public borrowing is crowding out private activity,

there is ample room to fund more near-term fiscal support, particularly if it is paid for with additional long-term deficit reduction.

The U.S. economy is on the cusp of another recession. Businesses have stopped hiring and households are spending more tentatively. Bankers are re-evaluating whether it makes sense to continue easing credit standards and wondering if instead they should be battenning down the hatches again. Declining stock prices and widening credit spreads suggest investors are also losing faith.

CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE

Recession risks are uncomfortably high largely because confidence is low. The economy has fundamental problems, including the foreclosure crisis, a surfeit of residential and commercial real estate, and yawning government deficits. But even more serious is that investors, consumers and businesses appear shell-shocked by recent events.

Confidence normally reflects economic conditions; it does not shape them. Consumer sentiment falls when unemployment, gasoline prices or inflation rises, but this has little impact on consumer spending. Yet at times, particularly during economic turning points, cause and effect can shift. Sentiment can be so harmed that businesses, consumers and investors freeze up, turning a gloomy outlook into a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is one of those times.

The collective psyche was already very fragile coming out of the Great Recession. The dramatic loss of millions of jobs and double-digit unemployment have been extraordinarily difficult to bear. Businesses have also struggled with a flood of major policy initiatives from Washington, led by healthcare and financial regulatory reform. The lengthy political battle over raising the nation's debt ceiling and Standard & Poor's downgrade of U.S. debt eviscerated what confidence remained. While the loss of S&P's AAA rating has little real significance—Treasury yields have fallen since the downgrade—it unnerved investors, judging by the plunge in stock prices. Consumer and small-business confidence gauges are as low as they have been since the Great Recession.

Consumers and businesses appear frozen in place. They are not yet pulling back—that would mean recession—but a loss of faith in the economy can quickly become self-fulfilling. Whether the current crisis of confidence produces a double-dip recession depends critically on how policymakers respond. Washington must act aggressively to stabilize sentiment and lift flagging expectations.

If no changes are made to current federal fiscal policy, the economic impact of that policy will shift from acting as a small drag this year to subtracting 1.7 percentage points from real GDP growth in 2012. For context, at the peak of the federal fiscal stimulus in 2009, federal policy added 2.6 percentage points to real GDP growth. Yet as the impact of federal policy shifts from a stimulus to restraint, the private sector must grow faster for the economy to simply grow at its potential. In 2012 that potential is estimated at 2.7%; to reach it, private sector GDP would need to grow well above 4%. That seems unlikely given the weak pace of recovery.

The biggest drag next year under current federal policy comes from the scheduled expiration of two stimulus measures at the end of 2011: the current 2% employee payroll tax holiday and the emergency unemployment insurance program. Not extending the programs will shave 0.9 percentage point off 2012 real GDP growth and cost the economy some 750,000 jobs. The end of other fiscal stimulus measures enacted in 2009 will further reduce economic growth.

State and local government actions are already producing serious drags on the economy. Spending cuts and tax increases will shave an estimated 0.5 percentage point from real GDP growth this year and almost as much in 2012. The impact can be seen clearly in the job market. State and local governments have cut close to 700,000 jobs since their employment peaked three years ago and are continuing to shed workers at a stunning rate, averaging nearly 40,000 per month. Many of those losing their jobs are middle-income teachers, police, and other first responders.

The need for more federal fiscal support is increasing as the Federal Reserve's ability to respond to the weak economy diminishes. The Fed recently took a bold step by stating its intention to keep short-term interest rates near zero until mid-2013. This has brought down long-term interest rates and provided some support to stock prices. The Fed can provide even more help by extending the maturity of the Treasury bonds it owns and by purchasing more long-term bonds through another round of quantitative easing. But these ideas are not without problems, chiefly that they are becoming less effective in stimulating the economy.

THE FED CAN'T DO IT ALONE

Acknowledging this in his recent Jackson Hole speech, Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke focused attention on fiscal policymakers. Bernanke explained that Congress and the Obama administration must follow through on plans for long-term deficit reduction but also must provide additional near-term support to the economy. Monetary policy alone may not be able to prevent another recession.

Additional fiscal help for the economy wouldn't be desirable or even possible if the federal government's debt costs were rising or if government borrowing were tightening credit for households and businesses. But there is no evidence that such crowding out is occurring. Ten-year Treasury yields have fallen below 2%, a near record. This is in part because of the Fed's actions, but the U.S. also remains the global economy's safe haven. Whenever there is a problem anywhere, the investment of choice is a Treasury bond—witness the current flight to Treasuries sparked by financial turmoil in Europe. Borrowing costs for households and businesses also remain extraordinarily low, with fixed mortgage rates closing in on a record low of 4% and Baa corporate bond yields (the lowest investment grade) nearing a 50-year low below 5.5%.

ASSESSING THE PLAN'S COMPONENTS

The president's jobs plan includes a wide range of temporary tax cuts and spending increases. The plan would cost close to \$450 billion over 10 years, with slightly more than \$250 billion coming from tax cuts and \$200 billion from spending increases. For context, the plan's cost is equal to about 3% of current GDP and just over half the \$825 billion ultimate price tag for the 2009 Recovery Act.

The largest tax cuts include an extension and expansion of the payroll tax holiday for employees and a creative new payroll tax holiday for employers. Employers would be able to cut their payroll taxes in half on up to \$5 million in taxable wages annually. Small businesses, many of whom are cash-strapped, would enjoy a sizable albeit temporary boost in their cashflow. Businesses will also pay no additional taxes on any wages that rise from the year before, up to \$50 million. This would give firms a substantive incentive to increase hiring and should result in a larger economic bang for the buck—additional GDP per tax dollar—than previous job tax credits such as last year's HIRE Act.

The president has also proposed a tax credit for businesses that hire people unemployed longer than six months—a group that, astonishingly, includes half the jobless. The longer these workers remain unemployed, the harder finding work becomes as their skills and marketability erode. Structural unemployment thus rises as a long-term threat; it appears to have already risen from around 5% before the Great Recession to closer to 5.5% currently.

DOING INFRASTRUCTURE THE RIGHT WAY

The Obama plan's most significant spending increases, totaling more than \$100 billion, are for infrastructure. Such development has a large bang for the buck, particularly now, when there are so many unemployed construction workers. It can also help remote and hard-pressed regional economies and produces long-lasting economic benefits. Such projects are difficult to start quickly—"shovel ready" is in most cases a misnomer—but since unemployment is sure to be a problem for years, this does not seem a significant drawback in the current context.

More serious concerns are the expense of infrastructure projects and their often political rather than economic motivation. A creative way to address these concerns is through an infrastructure bank—a government entity with a federal endowment, able to provide loans and guarantees to jumpstart private projects. These might include toll roads or user-supported energy facilities or airports. Private investors and developers would determine which projects to pursue based on what works financially rather than politically. The infrastructure bank would take time to launch, however, and thus would not produce quick benefits.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORMS

The president also proposes more funding for unemployment insurance, but in combination with some much-needed reforms to the UI system. One idea involves scaling up a Georgia program that places unemployed workers at companies voluntarily for up to eight weeks at no charge to the businesses. Along with their unemployment benefits, workers receive a small stipend for transportation and other expenses, training, and a tryout with the employer that could lead to a permanent job. Employers can potentially abuse the program by recycling unemployed workers, but the program seems to have had some success since it began in 2003.

Another idea to reform UI is to more broadly adopt "work share" as an alternative to temporary layoffs and furloughs. Instead of laying off workers in response to a temporary slowdown in demand, employers reduce workers' hours and wages across a department, business unit, or the entire company. The government then provides partial unemployment insurance benefits to make up for a portion of the lost wages. Work share exists in 17 states and several countries overseas, including Germany, where it is credited for contributing to a relatively strong recovery.

SAVING VITAL PUBLIC JOBS

Like the temporary extension of unemployment insurance benefits, work share has a large bang for the buck, since distressed workers are likely to quickly spend any aid they receive. Work share's economic effectiveness even exceeds that of straight UI benefits, because it reduces both the financial and psychological costs of layoffs. Work share can particularly help firms that expect reductions to be temporary, by reducing their costs for severance, rehiring and training.

Hard-pressed state and local governments would also receive additional relief under the president's plan. While state governments

appear to be working through their near-term budget problems, local governments are still struggling with flagging property tax revenues. The biggest casualties are teachers and first responders, and Obama's plan would help with their salaries through the end of the 2013 school year.

FROM A HEADWIND TO A TAILWIND

The president's plan would provide a meaningful boost to the economy and job market in 2012. Compared with current fiscal policy, the plan adds 2 percentage points to real GDP growth, adds 1.9 million payroll jobs, and reduces unemployment by a percentage point. Federal fiscal policy would go from being a powerful headwind next year to a modest tailwind.

Of the 1.9 million jobs added in 2012 under the president's plan, the largest contributor would be the extended payroll tax holiday for employees, which adds approximately 750,000 jobs. The payroll tax holiday for employers is responsible for adding 300,000 jobs, although this may be understated; quantifying the impact of this proposal is difficult. Infrastructure spending adds 400,000 jobs—275,000 jobs are due to additional unemployment insurance funding and 135,000 jobs result from more aid to state and local governments.

One potential pitfall of the president's plan is that the boost to growth and jobs fades quickly in 2013. Additional infrastructure spending and aid to state and local governments continue to support growth, but the benefits of the tax cuts peter out. The hopeful assumption is that the private sector will be able to hold up as government support abates. While reasonable, it is important to acknowledge that policymakers hoped for the same thing last year when they passed the one-year payroll tax holiday and extended emergency unemployment insurance through 2011.

ALSO NEEDED: HELP FOR HOUSING

The president's plan is large, but in some key respects it is not complete. Most notably, it does not directly address the foreclosure crisis and housing slump, save for some added funding for neighborhood stabilization. The President did mention in his speech that he would be working with the FHFA (Fannie Mae's and Freddie Mac's regulator) to facilitate more mortgage refinancing; this would be a significant plus for housing and the broader economy if he is able to break the logjam in refinancing activity.

With some 3.5 million first-mortgage loans in or near foreclosure and more house price declines likely, it is hard to be enthusiastic about the recovery's prospects. A house is most Americans' most important asset; many small-business owners use their homes as collateral for business credit, and local governments rely on property tax revenues tied to housing values.

Most worrisome is the risk that housing will resume the vicious cycle seen at the depths of the last recession, when falling prices pushed more homeowners under water—their loans exceeded their homes' market values—causing more defaults, more distress sales, and even lower prices. That cycle was broken only by unprecedented monetary and fiscal policy support.

OTHER CRITICISMS

The president's plan will be criticized for many other reasons. Some will argue that he should have proposed massive public works, like the Depression-era WPA. Others will say the plan should have included broader reforms to corporate taxes or even immigration. While these suggestions may have merit as policies, they seem like steps too far given what lawmakers need to do and how quickly they need to do it.

Given the current political environment, it is unlikely that much of what the president has proposed will become law, but nearly all the proposals have some bipartisan support. An extension of the current payroll tax holiday for employees seems most likely to pass and is included in the Moody's Analytics baseline economic outlook. The proposed expansion of the employee tax holiday and the new payroll tax holiday for employers are also possible. The president's spending initiatives, while worthwhile, seem like longer shots.

POLICYMAKERS NEED TO WORK FAST

The risk of a new economic downturn is as high as it has been since the Great Recession ended more than two years ago. A string of unfortunate shocks and a crisis of confidence are to blame. Surging gasoline and food prices and fallout from the Japanese earthquake hurt badly in the spring; more recently, the debt-ceiling drama, a revived European debt crisis, and the S&P downgrade have been especially disconcerting. Confidence, already fragile after the nightmare of the Great Recession and Washington's heated policy debates, was severely undermined.

Whether the loss of faith in our economy results in another recession critically depends on how policymakers respond. Whether they will succeed in shoring up confidence is a difficult call. The odds of a renewed recession over the next 12 months are 40%, and they could go higher given the current turmoil in financial markets. The old adage that the stock market has predicted nine of the last five recessions is apt, but the recent free fall is disconcerting. Markets and the economy seem one shock away from dangerously unraveling. Policymakers must work quickly and decisively.

Mr. LEVIN. This is what Mark Zandi said about the President's job proposal:

[It] would help stabilize confidence and keep the U.S. from sliding back into recession.

[It] would add 2 percentage points to GDP growth next year, add 1.9 million jobs, and cut the unemployment rate by a percentage point.

The plan would cost about \$450 billion, about \$250 billion in tax cuts and \$200 billion in spending increases.

Many of the president's proposals [may be] unlikely to pass Congress, but the most important have a chance of winning bipartisan support.

They deserve bipartisan support. Again, most of these proposals have been made by Republicans, not just by Democrats. But even if we cannot get the Republicans to support the proposal—because at least on the spending side it is the President's proposal; on the revenue side, it is now a Democratic Senate proposal in terms of the millionaires' surcharge—but if the Republicans will not vote for it, if they will not offer a substitute, an alternative of their own, if they will not seek to amend it to improve it, for heaven's sake, allow us to take up this bill.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. LEVIN. I am happy to yield.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. I say thank you to Senator LEVIN.

Yes, I try to explain this. I was on some radio calls this morning with stations in Dayton and Cincinnati and all over the State, and the questions they

asked were just that: Wait a minute, OK, I understand people being against a proposal, but why would the leader of one political party say about a jobs bill—when unemployment is this high in the Senator's State and my State and millions and millions of Americans want jobs and cannot find them—why would they say: Let's not even put it on the floor for discussion.

The rules of this place are peculiar, obviously, but why would you say: I am not even willing to bring it up for a vote. I am not even willing to debate it. I am not even willing to set the stage so we can discuss it.

People do not want to hear about process. I understand that. But people do want us to do something about jobs. The first step is, you have a debate—you bring the bill forward, you have a debate, you offer amendments, and then you come up with something.

Last night, as you recall, I say to Senator LEVIN, right before the jobs bill vote, we had a huge bipartisan vote, with 63 votes for the China currency bill. To do what? I know the Senator has advocated for years that we have a level playing field in our dealings with China so that so many Chinese companies do not get an advantage selling here and so that so many Michigan and Ohio companies do not get a disadvantage—a currency tax; a tariff, if you will—when our companies in Michigan and Ohio try to sell into China.

So I guess I am curious as to the Senator's thoughts on why we would not even set up ourselves—why Republicans would not want to at least come together and say, let's debate it. Then maybe we can make some interesting amendments we can come together on, like we came together bipartisanship just 24 hours ago—less than that—fewer than 24 hours ago, to come up with a real jobs bill.

Mr. LEVIN. I wish there was an explanation which was satisfactory or an answer which was satisfactory to Senator BROWN's question. I am afraid the only answer I can come up with is because this started off as President Obama's job bill. It has been changed. Now we have a different source of funding for it. We have a millionaire's surcharge in there which will fund these critically important programs, these job-creation programs.

I cannot think of any other reason, other than they think it will simply go away. What is an explanation? Maybe it was in the unanimous consent request of the Republican leader last night: I ask unanimous consent that this bill not be amendable—no amendments would be in order under his unanimous consent proposal—and then when it does not get 60 votes, which he knew it would not get, that it be immediately returned to the calendar.

That is what he asked twice last night—immediately be returned to the calendar. The Republican leader wants this bill to go away. It cannot go away. It should not go away. It will not go

away. The majority leader has already said he is going to move to reconsider the vote last night. I expressed the hope, in my remarks, that the President use his bully pulpit not just to support the jobs bill, which is critically important—he is doing a good job as he goes around the country—but to make it clear where the obstruction is; that the Republicans will not allow us to consider a jobs bill, amend it if they want to try, substitute their own if they have one, which so far they do not. But let us debate this bill. I hope the bully pulpit of the President is used, not just to support a jobs bill, which is so critically important, but to point out where the obstruction is.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN.) The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I wish to join Chairman LEVIN in his plea that we be allowed to consider this legislation. The greatest crisis we face in the United States, for families all across the country, is jobs. The President has proposed a bill that is going to help us begin to deal with that job crisis, and he proposed a way to pay for it. An overwhelming portion of the country, the polling is definite, supports the President's proposal and our proposal, as modified by Senator REID, to have a surcharge on individuals making over \$1 million.

So we have a bill that responds to the greatest need, that is paid for by doing what the American people overwhelmingly want us to do, and we cannot get it on the floor for debate, for amendment, and finally for passage. We are not able to respond to this crisis because we have been frustrated by our colleagues who refuse to let us take up the bill. The American people are demanding we act—the message is being sent far and wide in many different mediums—and we get it directly from home, and it is: Do something. It might not be perfect. It might not solve the problem immediately. But do something. Do not just stop debate, stop progress, stop discussion on the issues that are so critical to this country.

Again, we are in a serious jobs crisis. We have seen the latest job report showing some sort of improvement but not enough, and we have to do more. If we do not pass the American Jobs Act, then we are going to be in a situation where—and this is one of the great ironies—the deficit will get worse, not better. One of the most direct ways to begin to deal with the deficit is to put people to work so they can resume their participation in the economic life of this country and contribute not only to their own well-being and that of their family but the growth of the country, and the robustness of our economy. In that way, we can address the deficit.

So this refusal to act does not even serve the goal of deficit reduction. Again, I wish to emphasize this: We have a bill that has measures in it that

are proven, that are bipartisan, that will put people to work, and that are fully paid for by a tax that is overwhelmingly supported by the American people. If we do not act, the jobs crisis and our deficit will persist.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to thank the Senator from Michigan for bringing us together and making the point, as clearly as we can make it, that last night we had a chance to launch maybe the most important single issue in debate that we can consider in the Senate. We had a chance to bring both parties to the floor of the Senate and ask for the best ideas each of us has to move the economy forward.

The President has a plan. I think it is a good one. I support the plan. I think it is a reasonable way to move this economy forward and put people to work. But it is the nature of the legislative process that some will disagree with one aspect of it, some with others, and Members may have their own ideas to bring to the floor. That is what this branch of government is all about, that we have this debate, an open debate, Democrats and Republicans on the floor, and at the end of the day vote on something to move forward with together.

But last night not one single Republican Senator would join us in an effort to bring this matter to a debate on the floor. In fact, the Senator from Michigan has made the point over and over that the Republican filibuster requiring 60 votes to break the filibuster is stopping the majority from acting in the Senate on the issue of creating jobs—a Republican filibuster. That is problematic. It is troublesome. It is frustrating.

Because I am sure in Michigan, where they have been wracked for years now with unemployment and businesses struggling—we have similar problems in Illinois, 14 million Americans unemployed across the board. Take a look at what the Senator from Kentucky comes and tells us every day as Republican leader. He tells us that one of the big problems with this bill, as he sees it, is it is paid for. He does not like the fact that President Obama has paid for it and certainly does not like the way he paid for it. The way he paid for it is to impose a surtax of 5.6 percent on people making more than \$1 million a year. That generates enough revenue, over a 10-year period of time, that we can give a payroll tax cut to working families across America, and we can provide tax incentives for businesses to hire unemployed veterans and people who have been out of work for a long time.

The money generated from that millionaire's tax is going to end up allowing us to save, in my State, 14,000 teacher, firefighter, and policemen jobs that otherwise would be lost. It will allow us to put money into modernizing our schools—which we need to do

in Illinois and across the country, in Minnesota, Michigan, in Montana and every State and to build the basic infrastructure that America needs to be successful. Senator MCCONNELL has said over and over, he will not agree to this tax hike.

Let's take a look at what middle-income Americans are paying as an effective Federal tax rate as opposed to the wealthiest in America, the point made over and over by President Obama and a point worth repeating today. Middle-class families in America, people making between \$50,000 and \$75,000 a year have an effective Federal tax rate of 14.9 percent. The wealthiest 1 percent, those making over \$1 million a year, their effective Federal tax rate, 12 percent; 14.9 percent for middle-class families, working families; 12 percent for the wealthiest. What is wrong with this picture? What is wrong with it is that working families across America struggle paycheck to paycheck, and they are paying a higher Federal tax rate than the wealthiest people in America.

I think everyone in America has to sacrifice. Now I know, some of the most vulnerable in America cannot. Physically, mentally they cannot rise to this challenge. But the rest of us, for goodness' sake, have to be prepared to sacrifice. Working families are already sacrificing, living paycheck to paycheck. To ask the wealthiest people in America, who are comfortable in this country because of the greatness of our economy, this open and transparent system, this rule of law we have, to ask them to pay a little more so America can move forward is not unreasonable.

I would say this: At the end of the day, when the economy picks up and moves forward, and it will, the folks in the highest income categories are going to do quite well. It is the bottom line. They are going to do well. The ones I have run into, the ones I have talked to who are fortunate enough to be in this category—I know a few of them—say: This is not unreasonable, Senator. Why do the Republicans oppose \$1 in additional taxes to get the American economy moving forward?

But that, of course, is the reason the Senate Republicans, not a single one of them, would support bringing this jobs bill from the President to the floor. A second reason is fairly obvious. It is the President's plan. For many of them they are in full campaign mode now. They do not want to give this President anything that looks like a victory. So they are not going to vote for anything that has his name on it. In fact, they will oppose things which historically they have supported. When President Bush came forward with his own stimulus plan to create jobs, supported by the Republicans, it had a payroll tax cut in it—a payroll tax cut for working families. It also had tax breaks for businesses to hire the unemployed. That is what President Obama proposes, and now the Republicans have said: Oh, we liked it as a Bush plan. We do not like it as an Obama plan. What is the difference? The name.

I do not think the American people are going to cut us any slack if they believe we are spending more time designing bumper stickers for next year's election than we are in designing an economy that moves this country forward. I think they expect us—they demand of us—that we respond to this. When the Republicans impose a filibuster on President Obama's jobs act it is wrong. Let us have, as Senator REID asked for last night, let us have the motion to proceed, let's get on this matter, and let's do it this week.

I wish to say a word as well—Senator MCCONNELL comes to the floor frequently and says: Whoa. There is a big jobs bill coming up, the trade agreements. Listen, trade agreements can expand opportunity for the sale of goods and services. That is a fact. But when we look at the scheme of things and look at these trade agreements, the proposal I have read says the South Korea Trade Agreement would expand U.S. exports by \$10 to \$11 billion and support up to 70,000 jobs. That is a lot of money and a lot of jobs, except when we look at the universe—\$10 to \$11 billion in additional exports to Korea at a time when we have a \$15 trillion economy. Good but not good enough. We need to make sure we are expanding jobs at a greater rate to get people back to work. The other two trade agreements are much smaller in comparison. So to argue that these trade agreements are the engine that will pull us out of the ditch and drive the economy forward is to completely overstate the positive impact which they might have.

I would say to my friends on the Republican side, do not believe that voting for a trade agreement that generates \$10 billion more in exports and 70,000 jobs will solve the problems we face in America.

Yesterday, I went to a place called Career Tech in Chicago, funded by the Federal Government, an effort to take people who have been out of work for a long time and get them back into the workforce. They are introducing workers who had successful careers at businesses that closed to a new world, the world of social media, the world of information technology. They are learning. With that new education and training, they are getting new jobs.

I asked them about what life was like unemployed. Some of them have been out of work for over 2 years. I said to them: The President wants to extend unemployment benefits for those out of work. A lot of folks on the other side of the aisle are saying: Oh, we already tried that. We are not going to try that again. I said: What would happen to your family without unemployment benefits? To a person they said: I am not sure if we could have survived.

They are basically making the mortgage payment, paying utility bills, putting food on the table—the basics. So if the Republicans are opposed to unemployment benefits for those who cannot find a job, no matter how hard they

try, unfortunately, that is going to have a devastating impact on working families across America.

For a footnote, I asked each one of them: What happened to your health insurance when you lost your job? They lost their health insurance. Think about it, Mom and Dad. Think about your responsibility to one another and to your kids with no health insurance. I mean, that is what happens to an unemployed person. Life is not a crystal staircase for these folks. They are just basically trying to get by and find a job. We need to help them. It is time for the Republicans to stop the filibuster and bring the Obama jobs bill to the floor. If they have better ideas, present those ideas as amendments. Our people will present their ideas. Let's have a full-throated debate about moving America forward. But for goodness' sake, let's not stop the American economy cold in its tracks in an effort to preserve a Republican filibuster.

It is time for us to move together in a bipartisan nature as a Congress in both political parties. I thank my colleague from Michigan for bringing us together for this conversation. There is nothing more topical that we face.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, Colombia remains the most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists and workers seeking to exercise their internationally recognized right to organize and bargain collectively. The International Trade Union Confederation reported that in 2010 Colombia had 49 union worker assassinations. That is more than the rest of the world combined. To make matters worse, a 2011 ILO report found that the majority of the cases of violence against workers in Colombia had not been investigated nor had the perpetrators been brought to justice. That is simply unacceptable and the United States should not enter into a free trade agreement with a country with such an atrocious human rights record.

The Colombian government has failed to enforce its laws, adhere to its international commitment on worker rights, or to prosecute those who commit acts of violence against workers. This repression of fundamental labor rights presents a threat to the lives of the workers in Colombia and a threat to the livelihoods of the workers in the United States who are forced to compete against a country that doesn't play by the rules.

I have written several letters to the administration expressing concerns about entering into a free trade agreement with Colombia until these worker rights abuse concerns are adequately addressed. The agreement before us does not adequately address them, and as a result I will oppose H.R. 3078, the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act.

The Obama administration recognized the need to address these concerns before the free trade agreement

could be submitted to Congress and reopened the Bush administration-negotiated U.S.-Colombia FTA to try to address them. That resulted in the action plan related to labor rights agreement reached between the U.S. and Colombia on April 7, 2011.

The action plan lists steps Colombia must take to improve its record on antilabor violence and, if rigorously implemented and enforced, could protect Colombian workers' internationally recognized rights. Unfortunately, we gave up any leverage we had to ensure this outcome would occur when we failed to link the action plan to the FTA or its implementing legislation. Both House and Senate Democrats during committee mark up of the bill proposed an amendment that would have created a link between the two, but Republicans blocked any reference to the labor action plan in the Colombia FTA.

I disagree with the administration's conclusion that Colombia has made enough progress on implementing the Action Plan to send the U.S.-Colombia FTA implementation act to Congress. Because this free trade agreement is being considered under fast-track procedures, Members of Congress like me, who would like to amend it to make improvements such as linking entry into force of the Colombian FTA to Colombia meeting its obligations under the action plan, cannot do so.

Yes, Colombia may so far have technically met its commitments under the action plan. But it has done this only in the narrowest sense, and not in a way that really tries to address the labor problem. For instance, in Colombia, only workers who are directly employed by a company or business can form a union and collectively bargain. To get around allowing workers to form unions and collectively bargain, Colombian employers have formed cooperatives, or made other arrangements to hire their employees as contractors rather than as direct employees. The action plan addressed these abuses by requiring Colombia to pass legislation and regulations to prohibit such misuse of cooperatives and contract employees. Colombia did pass legislation and regulations that looked good on paper, but they were undermined when Colombia decided to narrowly interpret the new law and regulations as applying only to cooperatives. This leaves plenty of ways for employers to continue the same practice under a different guise.

Given the lack of full implementation of the action plan to date, and without a provision explicitly inking implementation of the FTA to Colombia addressing anti-union violence, impunity and fundamentally deficient labor laws under the action plan, the legislation is fundamentally flawed and I cannot support it.

I recognize that we currently do not have two-way trade with Colombia because most Colombian exports enter the U.S. duty free under the Andean Trade Preferences Act. Some might say

we should adopt the U.S.-Colombia FTA so U.S. exports can face lower tariffs in Colombia. But Colombia's market is small compared to the U.S. economy and as a result the ITC estimates the overall effect of the U.S. Colombia FTA on the U.S. economy is likely to be small. To me it is more important to insist that any country to which we enter a free trade agreement abide by internationally recognized labor standards and that plans to implement compliance actions be enforceable.

Mr. President, I will vote in favor of H.R. 3080, the United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act. I will do so because the Obama administration has succeeded in improving the automotive provisions in the Bush administration-negotiated original agreement. The result is that U.S. made vehicles now have a better opportunity to gain access to the historically closed South Korean market.

For too long, trade with South Korea has been a one-way street. The American market has been open and South Korea's market persistently closed by using a combination of tariff and non-tariff barriers constructed to keep U.S. products out. This was most pronounced in the automotive sector, which makes up the majority of our trade deficit with South Korea. For instance, in 2010 South Korea shipped 515,000 cars to the United States while U.S. automakers exported fewer than 14,000 cars to South Korea. In 2010, we ran a \$10 billion trade deficit with South Korea. Our trade deficit with South Korea in the automotive sector accounted for all of that \$10 billion. Correcting our deficit in the automotive sector would go a long way to fixing our overall trade deficit with South Korea.

The original 2007 U.S.-Korea FTA negotiated by the Bush administration was fundamentally flawed. The agreement called for significant concessions from the United States but would have perpetuated a skewed playing field that unfairly disadvantages U.S. automotive exports. It would have left in place the ever-shifting regulatory regime South Korea has used to effectively bar U.S. autos from the South Korean market. For example, South Korea has imposed so-called auto safety regulations that are unique to Korea and don't have anything to do with safety such as the location of towing devices or headlights or the color of turn-signal lamps. This means that no vehicle built outside of Korea can be sold in Korea without special and expensive modifications and testing to meet these Korean requirements.

The failure to address these and other arbitrary, ever-changing regulations was one of the main reasons the agreement was not brought before the Congress for approval so long. I was opposed to that agreement and as co-chairman of the Senate Auto Caucus I spoke out against it.

I am pleased that President Obama recognized the importance of the U.S.

automotive industry and reopened the agreement to negotiate significantly improved terms for U.S. auto exports to South Korea.

Importantly, the revised agreement will prevent South Korea from relying on discriminatory, rotating safety regulations as it has in the past to keep out U.S. auto imports. It does this by requiring South Korea to recognize 25,000 vehicles built to meet U.S. safety standards per automaker per year as meeting South Korean safety standards. This is an increase from 6,500 in the 2007 agreement. The revised agreement also includes an auto-specific safeguard designed to protect against potential surges of South Korean cars and trucks once the applicable tariffs are eliminated.

Under the original 2007 agreement, almost 90 percent of South Korea's auto exports to the United States would have received duty-free access. But why should we have reduced our few remaining tariffs to South Korean auto exports unless we were assured greater access to the South Korean markets for our auto exports? For instance, the U.S. auto tariff is only 2.5 percent compared to the South Korean auto tariff of 8 percent. The revised agreement corrected this inequity by reducing Korea's 8 percent duty to 4 percent immediately and to zero in year 5 while delaying elimination of the duty on South Korea's auto exports until year 5, giving U.S. automakers the time to build a brand and distribution presence that will reverse decades of South Korean protectionism.

The 2007 agreement was flawed also in how it dealt with the growing field of electric vehicles. The 2007 agreement would have allowed for a 10-year phase-out of the 8 percent South Korean tariff on hybrid electric passenger vehicles and the 2.5 percent U.S. tariff. That was not a fair deal for U.S. electric car exports. It's bad enough that the current South Korean electric car tariff is more than three times the U.S. tariff. The 2007 agreement would have locked in place for 10 years South Korea's electric car tariff advantage. Why in the world would we agree to that? Thankfully the Obama administration did not. Under the revised agreement, the South Korean tariff on electric cars immediately drops from 8 percent to 4 percent. Then the 4 percent South Korean tariff and the 2.5 percent U.S. tariff are phased out over 5 years. Though the tariffs are still not completely symmetrical, it's a big improvement over the original deal. And importantly, this phase-out now tracks the EU-Korean FTA, so U.S. automakers will now not be disadvantaged compared to European auto makers in the South Korean market as they would have been under the 2007 agreement.

Stakeholders, including Members of Congress, the United Auto Workers and U.S. auto companies, pushed hard for improved market access in the U.S.-Korea FTA. Thanks to the improvements the Obama administration has

negotiated, the UAW, Ford, GM and Chrysler as well as the Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association, MEMA, among others, support the agreement. They think it will result in their being able to sell more U.S.-made vehicles in South Korea. Specifically, Chrysler has stated that as a result of the FTA it expects to sell 20,000 units per year in South Korea by the end 2014 compared to the paltry 2,638 passenger vehicles it sold there in 2010, and that the company plans to expand its dealer network to 30 outlets from the current 16.

These additional U.S. auto exports translate into badly needed American jobs. The 2007 ITC report on the expected impact of the U.S.-Korean FTA estimated U.S. exports to South Korea would increase by \$10-\$11 billion annually. The administration estimates that an additional \$11 billion in exports would mean around 70,000 more jobs annually. In an updated ITC report requested by Senator WYDEN to assess the impact on American jobs of the FTA tariff and tariff rate quota reductions on goods based on current economic conditions, the ITC concluded that the agreement has the potential to create about 280,000 American jobs.

The agreement also has strong labor and environmental provisions that were agreed to in May 2007 at the insistence of Democratic Members of Congress, led by my brother, Congressman SANDY LEVIN, the ranking member of the House Ways and Means Committee. They include the enforcement of a commitment to adopt and enforce internationally recognized labor and environmental standards and agreements.

It is high time we insisted on a different trade model that fights for a level playing field for American exports and American workers. I believe the revised U.S.-Korea FTA moves significantly toward that model and I will vote in favor of the legislation to implement it.

Mr. President, I will support legislation to implement the U.S.-Panama Free Trade Agreement. The Obama administration has taken important steps to address concerns about worker rights and environmental protections in Panama that represent a significant improvement over the original agreement negotiated by the Bush administration. And, after years of pressure from those of us concerned about the abuse of offshore tax shelters, Panama has finally removed a major impediment to this free trade agreement by agreeing to and beginning to implement a tax information exchange agreement.

For 6 years, the Bush administration failed to conclude a tax information exchange agreement with Panama. In 2009, I joined with Congressman DOGGETT in a letter to President Obama making clear that we could not support a free trade agreement with Panama unless that country upheld its international obligations under the Organi-

zation for Economic Cooperation and Development's standards for transparency. The OECD found in September 2010 that Panama has "potentially serious deficiencies" in its laws on tax transparency. Thanks to pressure from the OECD, the Obama administration and those of us in Congress who oppose offshore tax haven abuse, Panama negotiated an information exchange agreement that took effect earlier this year.

Panama also agreed in negotiations with the Obama administration to uphold internationally recognized labor rights, making changes in its laws to protect collective bargaining rights. These changes have removed a major obstacle to approval of this free trade agreement.

With Panama's agreement to meet international standards for tax transparency and labor rights, I believe the agreement before us will protect workers in both countries, and the interests of U.S. taxpayers who are tired of seeing others dodge their tax obligations using offshore tax havens.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise to urge my colleagues to lend their swift support to the pending free trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia, and Panama that have at last come before this Chamber. In approving these FTAs, we have an opportunity to show the American people that we in Congress are prepared to set aside partisan politics and come together to do something truly important to help our nation at a time when our economy is under unprecedented pressure.

Simply put, free trade agreements like the ones before us today are not a choice for the United States—they are a necessity. As President Clinton used to point out, only 4 percent of the world's population lives in the United States, and there is only so much we can sell to each other. Creating new jobs and growing our economy requires tapping into the other 96 percent. And that requires breaking down trade barriers and lowering tariffs so that American goods can reach more consumers at a price they can afford.

That is precisely what these three FTAs will accomplish. This legislation is a jobs bill that won't add a dime to the deficit. Instead, it will add \$10 to \$12 billion to our GDP, grow U.S. exports by \$13 to \$15 billion, and support an additional 100,000 American jobs.

These FTAs are not only critical for our economic recovery, however. They are essential to our global leadership and our national security.

In the case of the Korea-U.S. FTA, known as KORUS, the success or failure of this measure is inseparable from U.S. leadership in the Asia-Pacific region. The balance of power in Asia will determine the shape of the 21st century and whether it will be an American century or a Chinese century. Our friends and allies across this region are looking to Washington. In the face of a rising Beijing, they want to know if

the U.S. is a country they can count on, or whether we are in retreat. From Japan to India to Australia, there is no test for American leadership today that is more urgent than approving our FTA with South Korea.

That is because the competition for the future in the Asia-Pacific is as much about economic power as it is about military power. Since 2000, approximately 50 free trade agreements have been put in place in East Asia alone, with approximately 80 additional agreements currently under negotiation. The United States is party to just four FTAs in the Asia-Pacific region.

Passing KORUS is the first step to righting this wrong and restoring a balance of economic power that favors America. Doing so will send an unequivocal message across the Asia-Pacific of American strength and commitment. It will also deepen one of our most important alliances in the world, with the Republic of Korea—a dynamic, free market democracy that has climbed from the depths of poverty and the devastation of war to become a model for the entire planet and a great global ally in the cause of freedom.

The economic benefits of KORUS are also extraordinary. This FTA will increase exports of American goods to Korea by around \$11 billion once the agreement is fully in effect, supporting as many as 70,000 additional jobs here in the United States.

The agreement will also grant American firms greater access to Korea's \$580 billion services market, creating new jobs for American workers in sectors from delivery and telecommunications services to energy and environmental services.

While South Korea is on the cusp of becoming our third-largest free trade partner after Canada and Mexico, free trade agreements with Colombia and Panama also offer enormous opportunities for the United States and will open the way for tremendous growth here in our own hemisphere.

Colombia is the oldest democracy in Latin America and one of America's most steadfast allies in that region. Like South Korea, Colombia is a great global success story—a country that has overcome narco-insurgency and terrorism, and a pro-American bulwark against Hugo Chavez's corrupt authoritarianism.

By completing this FTA, the U.S. will strengthen not only our Colombian allies, but also our shared values of democracy, rule of law, and the free market across Latin America.

The U.S.-Colombia FTA will also strengthen our own economy—expanding U.S. exports by more than \$1.1 billion, increasing U.S. GDP by \$2.5 billion, and creating thousands of U.S. jobs. Keep in mind, currently Colombia collects \$100 in tariffs on U.S. exports for every \$1 the United States levies on Colombian goods. With this FTA, that will end.

Similarly, the U.S.-Panama FTA will eliminate tariffs and other barriers to

U.S. exports, promote economic growth, and expand trade with one of the fastest growing economies in Latin America. American companies will be granted immediate access to Panama's \$21 billion services market, including priority areas such as financial services and telecommunications. Panama's economy expanded 6.2 percent in 2010, with similar annual growth forecasts through 2015. All of this translates to more opportunities for American workers.

Some have argued that free trade agreements threaten to increase our trade deficit. However, as the U.S. Department of Commerce recently pointed out, in recent years, U.S. manufacturers have run a \$47 billion trade surplus with our FTA partners; by contrast, we have incurred a trade deficit of \$823 billion with countries where no FTAs are in place.

Time is of the essence. If we delay any further on these agreements, it will cost our country dearly in jobs and growth. The rest of the world is not standing still.

The European Union finalized a free trade agreement with South Korea over the summer, and Canada implemented a free trade agreement with Colombia just weeks ago. If we do not act, jobs and market share that could have gone to U.S. companies will instead head to their competitors in Europe and Canada. That is why we must act now.

In conclusion, let me underscore how important it is that these FTAs are the beginning, not the end, of a revived American global trade agenda. In order to get our economy back on track, in order to create the new jobs we need, in order to lead the world economically, the U.S. must have a forward-looking, optimistic trade liberalization vision.

That is true not only in the Asia-Pacific and Latin America but also in the Middle East where millions of people who have long suffered and stagnated under thuggish dictators are at last grasping for greater political freedom and economic opportunity. More than foreign aid, countries like Tunisia and Egypt need the U.S. and Europe to lower trade barriers. That is why I believe so strongly that the U.S. should immediately begin negotiations for an FTA with Tunisia. Tunisia is a small country, but it is the place where the Arab Spring began and consequently critical to the future of Arab democracy.

I strongly urge the Obama administration to begin negotiations on a free trade agreement with Tunisia as quickly as possible. The freer the flow of world trade, the stronger the tides for economic progress, prosperity, democracy and peace will be.

Beginning today with the passage of these critical free trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Panama, we take another step towards restoring our economy and strengthening our global leadership.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I will yield briefly to the Senator from Montana, and I ask that we set an order. I thought I was scheduled to speak, but apparently it is up in the air. I will defer to the Senator from Montana and ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to follow him.

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

The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, the English poet, Thomas Gray, once said: "Commerce changes the fate and genius of nations."

The United States has always understood that commerce improves our fate and sharpens our genius. We know opening the channels of commerce creates new opportunity, generates new ideas, and forms new partnerships.

We know global commerce makes us more competitive, more innovative, and more productive—but also sometimes more difficult.

Today, the Senate has a historic opportunity to build on this legacy by approving our free-trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. These agreements will increase exports of U.S. goods and services. They will create tens of thousands of good-paying American jobs. They will bind us even more closely to the three important allies.

Colombia, especially, has returned from the brink of becoming a failed state to being the third largest economy in Latin America and one of its most respected leaders. It is astounding just how far Colombia has come. It has a lot further to go, but considering the state of Colombia 15, 20 years ago, with the narcotics trade, paramilitary forces, and assassinations, it is amazing how far they have come. A lot of this goes to the courage of the Colombian people, and especially to the leaders. It has not been easy, to say the least.

Panama is the crossroads of global commerce and among the fastest growing economies in the Western Hemisphere.

South Korea is the world's 15th largest economy, our seventh largest trading partner, and a strategic ally in a very volatile region of the world.

Now, more than ever, we need to expand commerce and improve our economic fate. Clearly, with unemployment at 9.1 percent, our economy is growing too slowly. Consumer demand is too weak, and American workers, farmers, and ranchers are desperately seeking new markets and customers for their products.

The Colombia, Panama, and South Korea trade agreements will help U.S. exporters gain new customers in three lucrative and fast-growing markets. They will increase U.S. exports by up to \$13 billion each year. They will boost our GDP by more than \$15 billion, and they will support tens of thousands of urgently needed American

jobs. It will help the jobs picture—clearly, it will not solve it, but it will help.

These agreements will help folks such as Errol Rice, a fifth generation cattle rancher from Helena, MT. Earlier this year, Errol testified before the Finance Committee on the importance of the South Korea trade agreement. He told us that South Korea is the fourth largest market in the world for U.S. beef, and it is growing rapidly.

Errol welcomed the commitments I secured to increase funding for market promotion and fully implement our bilateral beef import protocol. But he underscored that our position in the South Korean market is at risk. Australia, a large beef exporter, is racing to conclude its own trade agreement with South Korea. By approving our agreement with South Korea today, we will help Errol and all American ranchers maintain their competitive edge, increase sales, and create jobs in their communities.

Trade agreements improve our economy only if they create a level playing field for U.S. exporters. We cannot allow our trading partners to gain unfair advantage by failing to respect workers' rights or protect the environment.

That is why the Colombia, Panama, and South Korea trade agreements include robust labor and environmental commitments that were basically made in 2007, with all the labor and environmental framework included in these agreements. These commitments require our trading partners to uphold internationally recognized labor rights, including the right to organize and bargain collectively. That is in the agreement.

They also required our partners to protect the environment, and these obligations are fully enforceable, just like the commercial obligations in the agreements. In many cases, our free-trade agreement partners have gone the extra mile to meet our high standards. Colombia is the best example. Many of us are concerned about labor violence in Colombia. We believe the death of even one union member is one too many.

I urge my colleagues to consider the progress Colombia has made in recent years and the commitment of the Colombian Government to continue that progress.

Colombia demonstrated this commitment in April when President Obama and Colombian President Santos agreed to the Labor Action Plan. In that plan, Colombia made specific and groundbreaking commitments to strengthen worker rights, protect workers from violence, and prosecute the perpetrators of violence.

Colombia has fulfilled every commitment to date. It has hired 100 new inspectors to enforce workers' rights. It has cracked down on the abuse of co-operatives. It has expanded protection of union members. It has sentenced to prison 47 people found guilty of killing

union members. There is still more to be done, but Colombia has demonstrated remarkable progress.

By approving the free-trade agreement, we will be able to enforce labor rights in Colombia, including the rights addressed by the action plan. If we reject the agreement, however, we lose our ability to ensure that labor conditions in Colombia will continue to improve. This is a very important point. Other countries' trade agreements with Colombia don't have the labor protection provisions. The U.S. one does have labor protection provisions that are very strong. If we don't ratify this agreement, then workers in Colombia will not be protected because other agreements don't protect them.

These trade agreements will also help us rise to the challenge of China. Today, China is the No. 1 trading partner for South Korea and No. 2 partner for Colombia and Panama. If we approve these agreements, we will give American exporters a leg up on competitors from China and other countries. If we reject them, China's advantage and influence in these markets will only grow.

After we approve these agreements, we should begin thinking about the next steps for our trade agenda. We should invite our new free-trade agreement partners to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, negotiations. We need to negotiate a Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement and extend these agreements to better facilitate even more jobs in America.

Colombia, Panama, and South Korea have demonstrated that they are willing to make the far-reaching commitments that our trade agreements require. Their participation in the TPP negotiations will help us achieve a high-standard 21st-century agreement that spans the Pacific.

Thomas Gray was correct when he said commerce changes the fate and genius of nations. There is no better example than the United States. We have benefited greatly from trading with foreign nations. In these tough economic times, we need to embrace these benefits now more than ever. For the sake of American exporters seeking to grow and create jobs, let's approve these three free-trade agreements.

One final point. I think it is fair to say that as we engage in commerce worldwide in countries around the world, we are not totally pure. We don't wear white hats, and other countries are not Darth Vaders and wear black hats. But it is true the shade of gray of our hats are a lot lighter shade of gray than the shade of gray of their hats, which is a darker shade. That is especially true in the American, Asian, and African countries—maybe a little less true in European countries.

These agreements are no-brainers. Why do I say that? Because with respect to Colombia and Panama, products, goods, and services coming to our country today are virtually duty free, virtually no tariffs, or nontariff trade barriers.

On the other hand, American products going to those countries today face very high tariffs and trade barriers, especially with agriculture but also in manufacturing goods. The figures are quite startling, frankly. So it is a no-brainer. These are, for the first time virtually, free-trade agreements. It is a freebie for U.S. exporters and American companies exporting products into Colombia and Panama. They are really free.

With respect to Korea, it is very similar. Korean manufacturing tariffs, tariffs that Korea has on U.S. goods are more than twice as high as U.S. tariffs on Korean-manufactured goods. Tariffs that U.S. companies face in trying to export to Korea are twice as high today as are the tariffs the Korean manufacturers face when they try to sell products in the United States. The average Korean tariff on U.S. agricultural goods is 54 percent. The average tariff on American agricultural goods that we are trying to sell in Korea is 54 percent, about 5 times as high as the tariff on Korean agricultural products as they attempt to ship to the United States.

That is why this is a no-brainer. This is so simple. Everybody should be for this agreement. It creates a more level playing field. I urge my colleagues to support this agreement. When they read the agreement and understand the terms, it should go through with no opposition because we are, in fact, helping Americans, American jobs.

The only wrinkle I hear about is Colombia. I have been there. When one is in Colombia—and I have known their leaders, the past two Presidents—it is clear that they have made huge progress. If we reject this agreement, I submit that the progress made thus far will slip, and the conditions in Colombia will start to deteriorate.

We must pass these three trade agreements. Also, the U.S. political-geopolitical position in South America is critical. If we adopt this agreement, that will enhance America's geopolitical position in South America. If we don't do it, Colombians are going to say: We have given up on the United States. We have been trying to negotiate this for over 5 years. Then where are they going to go? They will embrace Venezuela or China.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I also rise today to speak in favor of the pending free-trade agreements with South Korea, Panama, and Colombia.

More than 50 million Americans work for companies that engage in international trade. Currently, U.S. exporters operate at a distinct disadvantage in countries where U.S. goods face high tariffs or discriminatory regulations. Passage of these three free-trade agreements will erase those disadvantages and allow our American businesses to compete on a level playing field in the global marketplace.

For far too long, these trade agreements have sat on the President's desk. This delay has hurt our competitive advantage and cost American jobs. Moreover, the administration's slow walk of these bills has encouraged some of our major trading partners to go forward and quickly negotiate their own trade agreements with South Korea, Panama, and Colombia, putting their workers at an advantage over U.S. workers.

Canada has already approved trade deals with both Colombia and Panama. The European Union has passed agreements with all three countries. Canadian and EU workers and farmers are reaping the advantages of greater access to these markets.

Creating jobs, increasing investment, and growing the U.S. manufacturing and farming sectors should be our top priority. With a 9.1-percent unemployment rate, this is a no-brainer: export more, make our products more competitive by lowering the tariffs, and create jobs in America. What could be more clear?

If we fail to act, American businesses will continue watching from the sidelines as other countries enjoy duty-free trading and continue to gain an advantage over American companies and employees.

It has been estimated that failure to implement just the Colombia and South Korea Free Trade Agreements would lead to a decline of \$40.2 billion in U.S. exports. The net negative impact on U.S. employment from these trade and output losses could total nearly 400,000 jobs.

Small businesses in America will be the largest beneficiary of these free-trade agreements. These are the businesses that account for the largest group of U.S. exporters. Indeed, more than 97 percent of the U.S. companies that export are small businesses, and they account for one-third of the total U.S. merchandise exports.

Our farmers and ranchers will also benefit from these agreements as the exports of our agricultural products have historically suffered from high tariffs and other nontariff barriers.

South Korea. The South Korea Free Trade Agreement will be America's largest free-trade agreement in Asia. South Korea is our Nation's seventh largest trading partner and the United States is South Korea's third largest trading partner. The White House has estimated that when the free-trade agreement with South Korea is fully implemented, U.S. exports to South Korea will increase by \$11 billion annually and add as many as 70,000 U.S. jobs.

The pending agreement will open the door for increased U.S. exports to South Korea of our automobile products, which are among the U.S. industries and workers that will benefit. It should also be noted that approval of this free-trade agreement will send a strong message that we stand with our

allies in Asia and will further strengthen our long and positive relationship with South Korea.

Right here in our own hemisphere, the implementation of the U.S.-Panama Free Trade Agreement will guarantee American companies access to Panama's \$21 billion in services. This includes priority areas in financial, telecommunications, computer, distribution, express delivery, energy, environmental and professional services.

Once implemented, 88 percent of U.S. commercial and industrial exports to Panama will become duty free. The remaining tariffs would be phased out over a 10-year period. We need to act now in order to preserve current exports to Panama and pave the way for more. Panama has recently signed free-trade agreements with Canada and the European Union.

Nearly 5 years have passed since the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement was signed by the United States and Colombia on November 22, 2006. Last year, U.S. exports to Colombia totaled \$12 billion, with many of those subject to the high tariffs. Our exporters have paid nearly \$4 billion in duties to Colombia since that agreement was signed 5 years ago.

The Colombian Congress approved the free-trade agreement less than 1 year after it was signed. After 5 years, the Congress is only now finally considering this agreement. That is not the way to treat a friend.

With passage of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, 80 percent of U.S. exports of consumer and industrial products to Colombia will be duty free immediately, with remaining tariffs phased out over 10 years. The U.S. International Trade Commission has estimated that this agreement will increase the U.S. gross domestic product by \$2.5 billion.

On another front regarding Colombia, they once had one of the worst drug cartel problems in our hemisphere. With their determination and integrity and with our help, Colombia's Government and law enforcement systems have substantially cleaned out the Medellin and Cali drug cartels. To acknowledge their sacrifice this should have been the easiest of the free-trade agreements to quickly have confirmed.

We have waited 5 years, as Colombia has done so much for itself to clean up the cancer in their system. We should have done this 5 years ago. So I hope there is no hesitancy now and there is overwhelming support in this Senate for this free-trade agreement.

In conclusion, with so many American businesses and workers struggling during this prolonged economic slump, it should be the easiest thing we do to enact these three free-trade agreements. Exports support millions of jobs in this country. These agreements will promote American sales in markets where we have been at a disadvantage for too long.

It was disheartening that this administration let these agreements languish

for many months without taking action. We now have the chance to approve those before us today—these three—which are good for our bilateral relations with these three countries, for working Americans, for farmers and ranchers throughout our system, and for our struggling economy.

I am very pleased these votes are being scheduled for today. We know the South Korean President is going to address a joint session of Congress tomorrow and to have these done and, hopefully, signed by the President when the South Korean President comes is the welcome gift he has been looking for, for a long time.

I so look forward to having these three free-trade agreements with these countries that have shown they want to do business with America, they want to have free and fair access into their country for our great products and our great workers, and we should let them have it without further delay.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 12 minutes.

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

TRIBUTE TO ALEX GLASS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, as every one of our colleagues knows, so much of what we do depends on the hard work and commitment of the dedicated staffers who toil behind the scenes on behalf of us and the constituents we represent. I wish to take a few minutes to recognize a member of my own staff who has been with me for many years, through good times and bad, and whose work ethic, competence, intelligence, and passion for public service is truly deserving of admiration and recognition as she now moves on to a new job, after more than 10 years of service in my office.

Alex Glass came to work for me on April 2, 2001. We hired her on as the deputy press secretary. She had graduated from Bryn Mawr the year before and had gone to work for the Gore for President campaign before joining my staff. Alex was similar to many young people who make their way to our Nation's Capitol after college. She was passionate about public service, wanted to make a difference, and cared deeply about her country and the serious issues we faced.

From the start, I knew Alex was a strong addition to my team. But just a few months later, it became clear to me she was much more. It was a Tuesday morning. We were right here in the Nation's Capitol. My communications director happened to be traveling that week. So even though Alex had just joined my staff, she was my only press staffer here that day.

As we all remember, a little bit after 9 a.m., we got word in the Capitol that planes had struck the World Trade Center. Shortly after that, I looked out the window of the Capitol and saw black

clouds of smoke filling the sky above the Pentagon. It was September 11, 2001, a day of unspeakable tragedy and devastating loss for our Nation. For those of us here in Washington, DC, and those in New York, and for families across America, it was a day of great confusion, uncertainty, and fear.

On that day, Alex stepped up for me, she stepped up for our office, and she stepped up for our constituents. Alex felt the same way every one of us did that day. But right away, she realized families in my home State of Washington were going to want to hear from their elected official in this time of national crisis. She was calm, she was collected, and she was already thinking ahead to what we were going to need to do that day.

So before we even evacuated, she quickly scribbled down the phone numbers of the major press outlets in Washington State, and then throughout that dark day and into the night, Alex and I stayed together and, through our State's press, I was able to reach out to families who were desperate for news and who needed to know that, despite this tragedy, their government remained strong. That day, I knew what Alex was made of, and I saw that spirit and dedication again and again over the next 10 years because Alex always knew what this job was all about—it was about helping people and solving problems.

I remember so many times I was in the room with my staff, where we were discussing one issue or another. Every once in a while, we would hear a soft voice from the chair to my left—Alex only talks when she has something to say—and in the clearest and most concise way, she would help bring our discussion from the theoretical to the practical: How does this affect families in our State? How will these policies help the people I was sent to represent? These were the questions that were always on Alex's mind because she knew those were the most important questions to me.

So many times over the years I would wake and check my e-mail and see an article Alex had forwarded to me—stories about veterans who weren't getting the care they deserved, workers who couldn't find a job or families falling through the cracks. She didn't include a comment with those stories. She knew she didn't have to. She just passed them along because she knew I would want to see them. She understood it was those people, the ones in those stories, whom I came to DC to fight for. Alex isn't from Washington State, but she dove into her adopted State with gusto, and within a few months she knew more about the issues facing our local communities than most people from Washington.

I remember one time—and I never thought I would tell this story out loud—Alex and I were in Port Angeles, and someone thought it would be a good idea for us to travel in a helicopter to our next event. It may have

been a good idea, but Alex and I—5 feet tall, both of us—had to put on these huge bright orange flight suits that were made for someone much bigger than either of us. I just remember catching her eye and we started laughing at each other and at ourselves. She and I had so many moments such as that together because Alex is very serious about her work, but she doesn't take herself seriously. She is much fun to be around, and she has a fantastic sense of humor, which is good for me because I don't think there is anyone I have spent more time with in my car traveling around Washington State than Alex.

On a particularly stressful or long day on the road, Alex always made sure we had cookies in the car, which I very much appreciated. Once, during a busier day than usual, I remember Alex and I having a conversation about all the fun places we had to pass by in the car as we drove to the next events but never had time to stop and visit.

We resolved to find the time to visit some of those when things got a bit slower, and I haven't forgotten about that. One day Alex and I are going to visit that alpaca farm up in Skagit Valley.

Alex also knew there was nothing I liked more than doing events where I could wear my jeans and tennis shoes, and I know she fought hard to make sure that happened as often as possible; and, Alex, I appreciate that.

Alex always had my back. She was always ready to get done what needed to get done. Back in 2004, I was facing a tough reelection campaign in my State. Alex had a life here in DC, but I went to her and I asked her to move back to the State to help me. I wanted her there, not because she is just good at her job and knows my voice so well—though she certainly is and does—but because she shares values, and I had every confidence that she would know exactly how I would want to tell my story and get my message out to the people in Washington. And Alex, without blinking, said yes. She packed up her bags and boxed up her apartment, she put her pet bunny in the car—I think this may be one of the most well-traveled rabbits in all of America—and she drove all the way across the country to fight by my side in Washington State. I don't know if I could have done it without her.

Alex then, after that election, came back here to DC and spent 6 years as my communication director. Then she did it all over again—uprooting her life, packing up that bunny, and driving all across the State when I needed her out in Washington State again last year. After she finished that job, I asked Alex to come back here to Washington, DC, to serve as my senior adviser and provide me with counsel and advice as I took on new challenges, and I was grateful when she accepted and got to work.

But 10½ years after Alex Glass first started working for me, the moment

came that I knew was always going to come but never looked forward to. Alex knocked on the door of my office and walked in, and before she could say a word I knew exactly what she had come to tell me. I gave her a hug. We talked. There may have been a few tears shed. But I always knew that Alex has the skills, the talent, and the experience to do absolutely anything she wants to do, and I am proud that she has chosen to continue working in public service and has accepted a job at USAID.

Although she is moving on, her amazing work and strong influence in my office will continue. Her words and her ideas have helped shape so much of what I have done and how I have communicated with my constituents. I can't tell you how many Washington State reporters have come over to me to thank me. They told me how helpful Alex was, how responsive and how good she was at connecting the policy debates here in Congress to the struggles of families and communities in our State.

Alex didn't just keep this to herself. She helped build and mentor a strong team in my office that knows what we are trying to do and understands my voice and how I want to communicate with the people I represent.

I have had many members of my staff come and go in my time here in the Senate. Many of them have been outstanding. Every one of them has added value and done good work for me and my constituents. But there are very few I have come as close to as I have to Alex.

Over the last 10 years, Alex, you have been like a member of my family, truly like a daughter to me. You have gone to the mat time and time again for me. You have been through thick and thin with us. You have sacrificed so much for me and my office, and I can't express enough how deeply I appreciate it. I know there is nothing you wouldn't do for me, and I hope you know I feel the same way about you. So on behalf of everyone in my office, all the constituents I represent, I want to thank you for the years of service to Washington State and to the Nation. You have been my voice, my adviser, my confidante and, most importantly, my friend. It has meant so much to me. And although I know it will continue, you aren't going away very far, I am going to miss seeing you in the office and hearing your voice almost every day.

So, Alex, as you start this exciting new chapter in your professional life, remember what Rob and I would say to you when times got tough out in the State: Shoulders up. Shoulders up. You have helped me keep mine up for more than 10 years, and I wish you luck now as you tackle your next challenge with the same heart, gusto, and good humor that you brought to our office every day.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:49 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BEGICH).

UNITED STATES-KOREA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT—Continued

UNITED STATES-PANAMA TRADE PROMOTION AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT—Continued

UNITED STATES-COLOMBIA TRADE PROMOTION AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent I be allowed to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

(The remarks of Mr. BINGAMAN pertaining to the introduction of S. 1692 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARDIN). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am happy to rise today to speak about the three trade agreements that are working their way over to the Senate. At a time when unemployment is over 9 percent and we have over 14 million Americans out of work, it is past time for us to take up these three important agreements. These agreements with Korea, Colombia, and Panama are going to create jobs and put Americans back to work. That is why it is so important we move, and move on a bipartisan basis, to get them done.

With 95 percent of consumers living outside of our borders, we need to proactively help American workers, farmers, and service providers sell their products all around the world. The President himself has said that repeatedly. Just last month he came to Ohio and said he wants to be sure more products are stamped with the three proud words "Made in America." I couldn't agree more.

One way to do that is to get these trade agreements done. Finally, we have the opportunity to vote on them. This will help us to gain market access for U.S. workers to about 100 million consumers.

Unfortunately, while these agreements have been sitting on the shelf for over 4 years, our workers, our farmers, and our service providers have lost market share. They have fallen behind because other countries have completed agreements, and their workers and their farmers, their service providers have gained market share that