

there because the Government of Sudan had sentenced her to receive 100 lashes and to hang by the neck until dead for the crime of being a Christian.

That is Meriam's only crime in Sudan, and for that crime she was sentenced to be tortured and executed.

Meriam was told by the Government of Sudan that if she would merely renounce Jesus Christ, she would be spared that horrible sentence. But Meriam told her captors that she would not and could not renounce Christ.

All of us value the religious liberty that is protected here in America that is precious to each and every one of us, and yet I would venture, very few, if any of us, have been tested in our faith the way Meriam has.

Now, 2 days ago, we had cause for celebration. Two days ago, the Government of Sudan—responding to the international outcry that this young wife and mother would be tortured and murdered for being a Christian—released Meriam. There were many prayers of thanksgiving 2 days ago.

Yet, Madam President, I am very sorry to tell you that yesterday, while Meriam was at the airport preparing to leave and come to America with her husband and her two little babies, armed thugs came to the airport and seized Meriam. She is back in a prison in Sudan.

This is wrong. This is an outrage. This calls for prayers across this country. And this calls for U.S. leadership.

I would humbly call upon President Obama to speak out for Meriam. There is no one who has a bully pulpit like the President of the United States. This is a case that cries for Presidential leadership. Her husband is an American from New Hampshire. Her babies are Americans. And this is a grotesque example of religious persecution. I would note that this should not be a cause for partisan division. Indeed, in this Chamber, I am pleased to have joined with Senator SHAHEEN, a Democrat from New Hampshire, and Senator AYOTTE, a Republican from New Hampshire, in legislation that would provide immediate relief for Meriam to allow her to come to America.

It is my hope this body can operate quickly in a bipartisan, in a unanimous manner, to act on that legislation so we can stand together. I am encouraged that so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have stood and fought for Meriam. We need to speak with one uniform voice.

I hope, in particular—I would urge, in particular—President Obama to stand and add his clear voice, to say to the Government of Sudan: Free Meriam Ibrahim.

I would ask everyone watching this to lift her up in your prayers and to speak out.

Sudan, 2 days ago, responded to the international pressure and released her. Now that they have apparently had a change of heart and forcibly captured her, we need to speak even louder. We need to speak for Meriam

Ibrahim because it is wrong for anyone—especially this young wife and mother—to be subject to torture and murder for being a Christian. That is unequivocally wrong, and we need to speak in one voice.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

EXPORT-IMPORT BANK

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I come to the floor today to talk about the Export-Import Bank—the program that is a vital tool of U.S. manufacturers and small businesses across the United States of America to help them grow jobs and gain access to international markets.

There has been a lot written in the last 24, 48 hours about this because there has been a lot of discussion about people who have previously supported the program—maybe voted for it five or six times—and now all of a sudden have either amnesia or have forgotten what is so important about this program.

I am here this morning to talk about this issue because I believe it is so vital to the U.S. economy and to the economic opportunities and challenges we face.

The Export-Import Bank basically gives assistance in the form of securitizing loans that are sought by the private sector when a U.S. company tries to sell a product overseas.

You can imagine that if you are a U.S. manufacturer—and you could be involved in lots of different things; in our State, there is everything from aviation to grain silos to music stands to agricultural products—when you go and say, well, we want to sell to Ethiopia or we want to sell to a South American country or we want to sell to an Asian country—for example, a small businessperson in the State of Washington says: Well, OK, I have found a customer in one of those countries for my product—and I will use grain silos as example because there is a company in our State that now sells grain silos to 82 different countries around the globe—that customer in that country says: Well, how am I going to finance this deal? It is not exactly like this sophistication is present in every one of these developing countries. Yet we want U.S. products to be sold into these developing countries.

I guess we could sit back on our laurels and just think it is all going to happen on its own and let the Europeans sell products into that market or let the Chinese sell products into that market or we could hustle—which is what the United States of America does—and we can figure out a way to secure those deals when those customers have a challenge of financing within their country.

Now, it does not mean that the Export-Import Bank finances all of those deals. It means it provides, in a lot of cases, security so that when a private

bank does finance the sale of that deal, there is certainty and predictability.

Why is that important? Well, as one vice president of a bank that operates in 19 different States and the District of Columbia told us: Most banks, even those as large as—in this case—PNC, cannot alone take risks for helping a U.S. company sell in countries with governments that may be less stable than the United States of America.

It makes sense. Right. Look at what we are seeing around the globe. We are seeing lots of change. You cannot count on a deal and account for the capricious nature of governments. If someone stiffes me in Pittsburgh, I will just go to a court in Pittsburgh and win a judgment against these individuals. Well, you cannot practically expand that to a government in Africa or in Asia. You cannot go to a court system here in the United States and say: Hey, that government failed to pay on that particular customer deal that was enacted. But you can, with the help of the Export-Import Bank, secure those loans and make sure that payment is received.

That is why so many small businesses across the State of Washington like and have used this program in conjunction with the private banking industry.

For example, there is a company: Manhasset music stands. I love that company because it makes music stands somewhat like this podium I am speaking in front of that is used for placement of music, and they sell all over the globe. In fact, China is one of their best customers. I love that there is a place in Yakima, WA, that is figuring out how to sell a U.S.-manufactured product in China and that they are continuing to compete with the Chinese every day and winning that battle.

I am so proud that company uses the Export-Import Bank to reduce their risk to those customers because those customers live in a place where the banking and security might not be there.

Why is this so important? Well, first of all, 95 percent of consumers in the world live outside of the United States of America. So unless we just want to sell to people in the United States of America, we better have a pretty good strategy of how we are going to sell to people outside of the United States of America.

So with 95 percent of consumers outside of the United States of America and a rising middle class around the globe—the middle class is going to double in the next 20 years. It is going to double. That means more people with more disposable income to buy products and to use services that are so critical.

Take aviation, for example. Because there is a rising middle class around the globe and a lot more people want to travel, that is 35,000 new airplanes that are in demand. That is how many we are going to have to build over the next 20 years—35,000 new airplanes.

Well, that could be really good news for the United States of America and U.S. manufacturing because those are great middle-class manufacturing jobs. But guess what. Those jobs are not secure. The Brazilians want to build airplanes. The Europeans already build airplanes. The Chinese want to build airplanes. They are all competing for that rising middle-class market that is demanding new airplanes. They all want to get in the action of having manufacturing jobs in their states.

So we need to make sure we implement the Export-Import Bank, which is about to expire on September 30 of this year. Without the Export-Import Bank, we are going to be hobbling businesses across the United States of America and not giving them these tools.

The Export-Import Bank has created thousands of jobs in the United States of America. It has increased exports by \$37 billion and helped small businesses and created jobs. It also helps us pay down the Federal deficit. It has generated over \$1.057 billion returned to the U.S. Treasury. So it has actually helped us pay down the Federal debt. So my colleagues who are now all of a sudden either having amnesia on why they supported the Ex-Im Bank or not coming forward to support it now need to remember what a vital tool this is to the U.S. economy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Ms. CANTWELL. I ask unanimous consent for another 30 seconds.

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

Ms. CANTWELL. I want to close by saying that other countries use these same financial tools. So a lot of my colleagues can see that other countries, for the same reason, when the marketplace does not provide a private sector financial tool to securitize these products—it is important that the United States stay competitive with everybody chasing global market opportunities.

Let's not hobble U.S. manufacturing. Let's get the Export-Import Bank out of committee and reauthorized.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions is discharged from further consideration of H.R. 803 and the Senate will proceed to the measure, which the clerk will report by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 803) to reform and strengthen the workforce investment system of the Nation to put Americans back to work and make the United States more competitive in the 21st century.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2:30 shall be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, for the next several hours we will be moving to a bill that the Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY, and the Senator from Georgia, Mr. ISAKSON, have had the principal role in fashioning. They will have a chance to talk about that. In just a few minutes the chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, Senator HARKIN, will proceed with the bill. But before that happens, I wish to take 3 or 4 minutes to talk about the importance of what is happening here.

In 1998 Congress passed a sort of "GI bill" for workers. The idea was to do what is at the top of every Governor's agenda in every State right now: How can we help more Americans get the job skills to fit the jobs?

When I was home in Granger County last weekend, the concern of Tennesseans was that it is too hard to find a job; it is too hard to keep a house; what can I do to get a job?

This legislation we are dealing with today, for the first time since 2003, reauthorizes \$9.5 billion in funds that will be spent through local workforce boards, through community colleges, and through State governments to help individuals in North Dakota, in Washington, in Tennessee, in Georgia get the job skills to find a job. This bill will make it easier for them for them to achieve that goal. It has the great advantage of not mandating how they do it from Washington but creating an environment where people can do this for themselves.

Our former Democratic Governor Phil Bredesen said to me that when he first became Governor and went to find out about the \$145 million of federal workforce development funding that comes to Tennessee, he just threw up his hands. He said: It is too complicated. I cannot do anything with it.

So he told his cabinet members: Do the best you can.

Well, working together with the House of Representatives, Senator MURRAY and Senator ISAKSON and a group of us here have taken this law that was passed 16 years ago and made some dramatic changes to it. They will tell you more about that. They will be talking about how we have taken many of the 47 work-training programs that exist in the Federal Government and simplified them, eliminating 15 programs that were ineffective or duplicative, eliminating 21 Federal mandates, streamlining multiple plans into a single State plan that reduces time spent on paperwork, streamlining reporting requirements, giving Governors more flexibility, giving local workforce boards more flexibility, and most importantly, giving the individuals who need jobs more opportunity to say: This is what I would like to do, and this is what I choose to do.

This has been no easy task. Senator MURRAY and Senator ISAKSON deserve a lot of credit from all of us because many Congresses have tried to reauthorize this law before. I am going to come back after about an hour and deliver a little more extensive discussion on this, but the 108th Congress, the 109th Congress, and the 112th Congress—all tried to do this but could not get a consensus about how to move forward. Finally, Congresswoman VIRGINIA FOXX produced the SKILLS Act in the House of Representatives. The House passed this bill in March of 2013. It came over here to the Senate. The Senate HELP Committee passed its bill last July. Led by Senator MURRAY and Senator ISAKSON, the Senate began working with the House, came up with an agreement, and, working with a number of Senators, we have reduced the number of amendments that actually have to be voted on today to two. So we will have two amendments to be voted on and then will vote on final passage. Then we will send the bill back to the House. Hopefully the President will have a chance to sign it.

I would like to say that I hope that in the midst of what is too much dysfunction in the Senate, this will be an example of what can happen when we put our minds to it.

The members of the HELP Committee, on which I am the ranking Republican, and Senator HARKIN, the ranking Democrat—we have some pretty big philosophical differences. Ideologically, we are not the same. But we have passed 19 bills out of the HELP Committee. 13 have become law this year. That is a record of accomplishment we are proud of. It shows that Senators with different opinions can come to a consensus and come to a resolve.

So let me step aside now and let those who have really done the most work on the bill speak—the Senator from Washington and the Senator from Georgia. I will be back in about an hour, and then we will be voting a little later this afternoon. This is good news for the workers of America, for the Governors who felt hamstrung by Washington, for the workforce boards who have been limited in their ability to meet the needs of local employers and workers, and for Senator COBURN, who has been a real leader in pointing out how many duplicative work programs we have. We have gone a long way in the direction he wanted us to go. I congratulate all of those Senators for the result.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

AMENDMENT NO. 3378

(PURPOSE: IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE)

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, as provided under the consent agreement, I now call up the substitute amendment No. 3378.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows: