

family being pulled down by very powerful forces, only having their wages go up 9 percent in 40 years, it is also about the wider economy. If folks don't have fair wages, it is going to drag down the economy, and we are seeing evidence of that over those 40 years.

But instead of enacting policies that help the middle class and focus on this issue of wages or the lack of growth of wages, like policies such as increasing the minimum wage—that would be one of the right things to do to go at this problem—or facilitating access to high-quality childcare, for a lot of families the second highest cost they have other than housing and maybe some other expense, usually housing or some other expense—No. 2 is usually the cost of childcare. It is a barrier to work. If you can't afford childcare, you can't go to work or you have to accept a job that pays less.

Extended relief to workers displaced by foreign competition. I would put the word “unfair” foreign competition. That is something else we should work on.

So if we are working on raising the minimum wage, growing the middle class, helping families pay for childcare, helping families pay for the terribly high cost of higher education, maybe no other number is more disturbing than this “wage, 9 percent in 40 years” number that I mentioned. Maybe the only other number more disturbing is the cost of college education going up higher than anything in our lives the last couple of decades.

Middle-class workers know this type of policy that some are pursuing is headed in the wrong direction. Instead of them seeing us working on policies that will advance and support the middle class, they see Congress considering a massive trade agreement with 11 Asia Pacific countries. So these same middle-class families who look to us for progress and action and results for the middle class and for their wages are seeing a lot of folks in Washington focus on trade agreements that will make the problem worse.

A recent Pew poll of the Nation found that 83 percent of Americans said free trade does not raise their wages and 45 percent said so-called free trade lowers American wages. For many years, many economists have argued that trade was a net positive for Americans and did not have a noticeable impact on wages. However, recently I think other economists are having a different perspective.

A 2009 paper by three economists, one from the University of Pennsylvania, found that when workers are displaced by trade and switch jobs, they suffer real wage loss of between 12 and 17 percent. So in light of this data by economists that says when you have a job switch or a job change because of trade and your wages are going to go down 12 to 17 percent, and all the other data that we have about what has happened in States such as Pennsylvania, or Ohio, which Senator BROWN rep-

resents—what has happened to those communities and those people—why would we go down the same path of ratifying agreements which will do the same over time? I don't think we should, and that is why this debate is very important.

Another analysis by the Economic Policy Institute, a standard economic model shows that American workers without a college degree earn \$1,800 less each year as a result of expanded trade. Again, further exacerbation of the same problem that trade agreements lead to.

I know people in my home State of Pennsylvania—and I am sure this is true in Ohio and a number of other States—are skeptical of these trade deals because they have experienced these pressures firsthand. This is real life for them. So before we cut another deal, we should work to level the playing field for our own companies and workers, including ensuring workers and companies get real relief from unfair trade practices.

Pennsylvanians and, I think, Americans want Congress and the administration to focus on policies that lead to both good jobs and good wages. Fundamentally, I argue that these agreements cause major concerns on both fronts, the jobs front as well as the wage front.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

SAVING THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to speak briefly about an issue that all Senators should be concerned about, and that is the future of the Organization of American States.

The origin of the OAS dates to the First International Conference of American States held in Washington from October 1889 to April 1890. The OAS was formally established in 1948 with the signing of the OAS Charter, which entered into force in 1951.

As the OAS Charter states, its mission is to achieve among its members “an order of peace and justice, and to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence.” That is an important and inspiring responsibility, and no less so today than when the OAS was founded, although many of the challenges of one-half century ago have been replaced by new challenges today.

Today the OAS consists of 35 independent States and is, at least in composition and tradition, the primary political, judicial, and social governmental forum in this hemisphere. Another 69 States and the European Union have permanent observer status.

The OAS supports programs and activities in four principle areas to carry out its mission—democracy, human rights, security, and development—and it does so in a myriad of ways, some far more successfully than others.

Few here may be aware that the United States is by far the largest contributor to the OAS, paying 60 percent of its annual budget. Two other countries pay 22 percent and the remaining 32 countries together pay only 12 percent.

Of course, the United States has by far the largest economy and should pay its fair share, but no country should be assessed to pay more than 50 percent. Other members should also pay their fair share, and we should all expect the OAS to be competently managed and to deliver tangible results that justify its expenditures.

The OAS can be proud of the indispensable work of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission and the Inter-American Court, its internationally respected election observer missions, and other activities to support democracy and promote transparent and accountable governance. These priorities should be strengthened, as I will mention shortly.

But the reputation of the OAS as a hemispheric leader has taken a beating. This is partly due to ideological polarization driven primarily by the viscerally anti-United States rhetoric and policies of the leaders of four of its member States, and partly due to the fact that the OAS has failed to exercise effective leadership in response to key issues and events, while recent sub-hemispheric groupings have taken up much of the slack and become the region's principal fora.

The OAS has allowed itself to be spread too thin, accepting too many mandates from its member States without rigorous assessment of the costs and benefits. Scarce resources have been spent on employees—without regard to transparent hiring and promotion practices—some of whom contribute little to the organization. At the same time, the OAS is facing severe budget constraints and there is no monetary reserve to respond to contingencies. It is astounding that because some countries, including Brazil, stopped paying their quotas or are in arrears, and the OAS had nothing in reserve, it had to obtain a loan in order to pay employee salaries. This is not the kind of management the OAS needs; it is mismanagement.

The Inter-American Commission and the Inter-American Court play essential roles as institutions of last resort for victims of human rights violations in countries where impunity is the norm. When corrupt, dysfunctional judicial systems fail to provide access to justice for victims of crimes against humanity or other violations of human rights, the OAS helps fill that void. Likewise, the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression plays a critical role at a time when some governments, such as Venezuela and Ecuador, are engaged in a systematic effort to intimidate and silence their critics in the

independent press, while others, including Mexico and Honduras, fail to protect journalists from threats and attacks by gangs or violence related to drug trafficking.

Yet a shortage of funding and the failure of some member States to comply with the decisions of the Commission and the rulings of the Court undermine their effectiveness. Some governments have actively sought to weaken these key institutions by withholding financial support and proposing to limit the legal authority of the Commission and the Court. They and the Special Rapporteur for Freedom and Expression need sufficient resources to do their jobs, and it is time to establish a mechanism for sanctioning noncompliance.

The United States is not blameless, having signed but not yet ratified the American Convention on Human Rights. This provides a convenient excuse for other governments to accuse us of hypocrisy as we urge their adherence to human rights norms. It is time for the Congress to act on this piece of unfinished business.

I would add, however, that the United States is part of the Inter-American Commission, as are all OAS member States, regardless of whether or not they have ratified the Convention. In fact, the United States has more cases at the Commission than any other country, and we strive to implement its decisions.

The OAS needs to strengthen its election monitoring capability—including insisting on timely and equal participation by opposition political parties, freedom of the press and association—to ensure a level playing field when some Latin governments refuse to allow early access by the OAS. Many Latin Americans are becoming cynical about the ability of democratic governments to deliver basic services in a manner that is transparent and accountable. Elected governments which are corrupt and neglect, or are unable to protect their people, erode support for democracy.

Similarly, the OAS and the Secretary General in particular need to respond swiftly to political crises, and exercise stronger leadership in defense of democratic institutions and human rights when they are under assault, consistent with the OAS Charter and the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

There is also the issue of hemispheric security. During the Cold War there was a single-minded, concerted effort to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining another foothold in Latin America. Countless innocent people were threatened, disappeared, tortured, or killed in the name of fighting communism by Central and South American security forces, many of them encouraged, trained and equipped by the United States, and only a token number of the individuals responsible have been punished.

Today the hemisphere faces new threats, such as drug cartels, gang vio-

lence, transnational crime, money laundering, and natural disasters. But the plans to address them like the Merida Initiative and the Alliance for Prosperity, while identifying such priorities as police and judicial reform, poverty, fiscal transparency, and corruption, tend to be long on goals and short on specifics of how to achieve them. Cooperation on multi-dimensional security threats is not a matter of ideology. Cuba and the United States are already cooperating against drug-traffickers, as we are with other countries. But there is a lot more that can and should be done to identify the causes and develop and implement more effective regional strategies to address these problems.

Several Latin countries have made notable strides in the past decade and are providing greater opportunities for their people. The OAS can play a role in convening a debate, identifying solutions, and facilitating an alliance of key development organizations, including the Inter-American Development Bank and the Pan American Health Organization, to address areas of shared interest such as achieving sustained, equitable economic growth, strengthening public education and health, and protecting natural resources.

The OAS has an important, underutilized role to play in interfacing with the wide range of civil society organizations which are essential to any democracy and are often under-appreciated, under-funded, and persecuted. With OAS offices throughout the hemisphere, its under-utilized employees could engage far more actively with academia, civil society, and the media. This should include any such entities that reject violence, not just those that are “registered” by local governments which sometimes use the registration process to silence legitimate voices whose views the government disagrees with.

Finally, the OAS needs to decide how to interact with other hemispheric multilateral organizations in a manner that strengthens the OAS and encourages cooperation. Cuba’s suspension, and then refusal to return, provided an impetus for the creation of new entities like CELAC, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, that are anti-OAS and anti-United States and have sowed division within the hemisphere.

The next Secretary General of the OAS, who will be selected on March 18, has his work cut out for him. I say “him” because there is only one candidate, which says volumes about how the job is perceived. The Secretary General plays a crucial role as the strategic leader, but not the day-to-day manager, of the organization. The next Secretary General needs an Assistant Secretary General with the managerial expertise and mandate to right this sinking ship.

It will mean tough budgetary decisions, including the ability to say no to new programs and mandates and to

focus instead on doing better at what it does best.

As soon as possible after they assume their positions I urge them to review Public Law 113-41, the “Organization of American States Revitalization and Reform Act of 2013.” That Act, which received bipartisan support, identifies key issues that need to be addressed—many of which I have touched on here—and provides recommendations for how to address them.

I wish them both well because the people of every country in the hemisphere, including those whose governments have sought to harm the OAS, need the OAS. But absent significant and rapid reforms beginning with the quota issue, the OAS’s decline may be irreversible.

CONTINUING AMERICA’S LEADERSHIP IN MEDICAL INNOVATION FOR PATIENTS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a copy of my remarks at the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing this week.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CONTINUING AMERICA’S LEADERSHIP IN MEDICAL INNOVATION FOR PATIENTS

We’ve got three major objectives in this committee: Fixing No Child Left Behind, Re-authorizing the Higher Education Act, and third—one we’re all looking forward to without exception—improving biomedical innovation, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Today is the first hearing Ranking Member Murray and I are holding on our bipartisan initiative to examine how we get drugs, devices and treatments from the discovery process through the regulatory process into our medicine cabinets and doctors’ offices.

Today discoveries supported by NIH often do not come to FDA’s door for six, eight, ten, or even twelve years. And the average cost to get a single drug from the laboratory through the approval process to the medicine cabinet is, according to some estimates, about \$1 billion. Other estimates say it’s double that or even more.

This initiative builds on work the committee has done—legislation was passed in 1997 and as recently as 2012—to try to get at the same goal of speeding up review and approval of drugs and devices while still ensuring they are safe.

This is a subject that has a lot of interest.

President Obama this year announced his new Precision Medicine Initiative, saying: “21st century businesses will rely on American science, technology, research and development. I want the country that eliminated polio and mapped the human genome to lead a new era of medicine—one that delivers the right treatment at the right time. In some patients with cystic fibrosis, this approach has reversed a disease once thought unstoppable.”

In the House, Energy and Commerce Chairman Fred Upton and Representative Diana Degette have been working on parallel tracks on their 21st Century Cures initiative to accelerate the pace of cures in America.

In late January, Sen. Burr and I released a report titled “Innovation for Healthier