

deficit, not cut it. Republicans claim they are reducing the deficit, but that is not true. In truth, they are using mirrors and a lot of smoke in an effort to fool the American people.

House Republicans are really hiding the ball—moving the ball—claiming massive savings without explaining how. They are, for lack of a better description, cooking the books, using speculative and what they call “dynamic scoring.” What is dynamic scoring? This is an effort to claim they are balancing the budget. Dynamic scoring says, here is all this tax revenue and other money we are going to get and it will help significantly. The fact is everyone knows there isn't any truth to that. It is only some numbers on paper. They are relying on transparent tricks to hide their refusal to protect our military from sequestration and budget cuts. Yet Republicans say of their own budget plan, we do not rely on gimmicks or creative accounting to balance our budget.

The definition of “gimmick” is a concealed, devious aspect or feature of something, as a plan or a deal—a concealed, devious aspect or feature.

Well, we have a perfect example of a gimmick in the Republican budget that the House is working on and we are told they will complete. It sounds like a gimmick to me. At least one Republican from the House agrees with me. Congressman KEN BUCK of Colorado said yesterday, “It's all hooley.” The budget is all hooley. But as Dana Milbank said in today's Washington Post, speaking of the House Republicans' plan: “True, the budget does not rely on gimmicks. The budget is a gimmick.” That is a direct quote.

We don't need gimmicks. We need a responsible budget and this is not a responsible budget. This is not responsible governance.

Unfortunately, though, this is the budget we have come to expect from today's Republican Party—a party that is so committed to supporting the superwealthy that they are throwing America's middle class and the military overboard.

Democrats are focused on the middle class. We want to create jobs, invest in the future, and make sure that all Americans benefit from an improving economy.

We are more than happy to work with our Republican colleagues in order to make our goals a reality. Unfortunately, helping the middle class just doesn't seem to be a priority for congressional Republicans.

Mr. President, would the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be

in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, and with the time equally divided, with the Democrats controlling the first half, and the majority controlling the second half.

The assistant Democratic leader.

LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this is the Executive Calendar of the U.S. Senate. This Executive Calendar tells us the nominations that are pending before the U.S. Senate where action is needed. There is one name to be found on this calendar on page 4—a name which has been sitting on this calendar longer than any nominee for Attorney General of the United States of America over the last 30 years. This name has been sitting on this calendar for 20 days, which doesn't seem like an extraordinarily long period of time. However, it turns out that the previous nominees for Attorney General were moved so quickly on this Senate calendar that the last five combined, by Democratic and Republican Presidents, took less time to be confirmed than this one name. What is that name? It is Loretta E. Lynch of New York to be Attorney General—a name that was submitted to the U.S. Senate by President Barack Obama to make history—a name, a nominee to make history. This is the first African-American woman in the history of the United States to be nominated to serve as Attorney General. It is a civil rights milestone that her name has been submitted.

I sat through the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, and it was a packed room. All the TV cameras were there. Loretta Lynch came and sat at the table, with her father behind her, with her family around her, with close friends gathered from all over the United States, and this woman calmly, in a dignified way, gave the most compelling testimony I have heard of any witness before the Senate Judiciary Committee, including those who came before us seeking to be appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court. She was excellent. No one laid a glove on her. No one raised any concern about her nomination. And then, when the public witnesses were invited to come in from both the Republican and Democratic sides to comment on her nomination, Senator PATRICK LEAHY of Vermont asked all of them gathered: Is there any one of you who opposes the nomination of Loretta Lynch to be Attorney General? Not one. Not one.

Yet, here we are now, with this nomination pending longer than any Attorney General nomination in the last 30 years. Why? Why has the Senate Republican leadership decided to target this good woman and to stop her from serving as the first female African-American Attorney General of the United States of America? There is no good reason. There is no substantive

reason. She has been an extraordinary prosecutor in New York. She has the support of so many outstanding organizations. The National District Attorneys Association supports Loretta Lynch, as do the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys. The FBI Agents Association supports Loretta Lynch, and a long list of Republican- and Democratic-appointed former U.S. Attorneys, including Patrick Fitzgerald from my State of Illinois, and former FBI Director Louis Freeh, appointed by a Republican President, and Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson from the George W. Bush administration. The list goes on and on.

The fact is there is no substantive reason to stop this nomination. The Republican majority leader announced over the weekend that he was going to hold this nomination of Loretta Lynch until the bill which is pending before the Senate passes, whenever that may be.

So Loretta Lynch, the first African-American woman nominated to be Attorney General, is asked to sit in the back of the bus when it comes to the Senate calendar. That is unfair. It is unjust. It is beneath the decorum and dignity of the U.S. Senate.

This woman deserves fairness. She seeks to lead the Department of Justice, and the U.S. Senate should be just in its treatment of her nomination. To think that we would jeopardize her opportunity to serve this Nation and to make history is fundamentally unfair.

What is the issue? The issue is this important bill. It is a bill which relates to human trafficking. As chairman of the constitution subcommittee, I have held hearings on this subject and it is heartbreaking to hear how primarily young women have been enslaved and exploited not just around the world but in the United States. I support this legislation. I think we should move it forward. What is holding this up is very simple: one sentence. Out of a 112-page bill, there is 1 sentence on pages 50 and 51 that relates to the issue of abortion.

I needn't tell anyone following this debate how controversial and divisive that issue can be and has been for so many decades in the United States. The fact is that issue has nothing to do with human trafficking. It should be debated at another moment, another time, on another bill. But, sadly, this 1 sentence in this 100-page bill is holding it up from being considered on the floor.

If the senior Senator from Texas, who is the lead sponsor on this bill, would come to the floor and simply remove this one sentence, this bill would pass. It would pass this afternoon, overwhelmingly. There is no question about it. He knows it. We have told him that. We have offered that to him, but he refuses.

So this good bill language is on the calendar, the Senate is mired in controversy, and Loretta Lynch sits on the calendar for another day.

It has been 130 days since President Obama announced the nomination of this woman to serve as our Attorney General. That is more than three times the period of time it took for us to confirm Attorney General Ashcroft. It is more than 2½ times as long as it took to confirm Attorney General Mukasey and twice as long as it took to confirm Attorney General Holder.

It is time for us to give Loretta Lynch an opportunity to continue to serve America and to make civil rights history by allowing this African-American woman to step forward and serve. It is time to stop holding her hostage to a political debate on the floor of the U.S. Senate that has nothing to do with her obvious qualifications to serve this Nation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, if there is one thing Americans have made clear, it is that they want their leaders to do something about the economy. The recession may have officially ended almost 6 years ago, but millions of Americans are still struggling economically and opportunities are still few and far between.

One big thing we can do to help the economy and expand opportunities for American workers is pass trade promotion authority or what we refer to as TPA. Our prior trade agreements have been a boon to the economy, providing American workers with jobs and American farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers with new markets for their goods. In my home State of South Dakota, 74 percent of exports go to countries with which the United States has a free-trade agreement. Between 2005 and 2014, South Dakota saw a 110-percent increase in exports to free-trade agreement countries. That has been a huge benefit to South Dakota farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers.

Speaking of farmers and trade, today is National Agriculture Day. I would just like to add as an aside that the substantial agriculture trade surplus the United States currently enjoys is a tribute to the efficiency and the productivity of America's farmers and ranchers. I salute American farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses that provide America and the world with a safe and abundant food supply.

Passing trade promotion authority is one way we can ensure an even greater

global expansion of U.S. agricultural trade. Currently, the administration is in the process of negotiating two new trade agreements that would open vast new markets for American products and put American goods on a level playing field internationally. The first of these agreements, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, is being negotiated with a number of Asia-Pacific nations, including Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, and Vietnam. Currently, American goods face heavy tariffs in many of these countries—at times as high as 85 percent. Tariffs of that size put American goods at incredible disadvantage compared to their foreign competitors. Tariffs provide a powerful disincentive for citizens in other nations to purchase American products. Removing this disincentive would increase foreign demand for U.S. products, which would mean more business for U.S. farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers and more jobs and opportunities for American workers.

Just to give an example of how important trade is to American agriculture, we currently export half of U.S. wheat, milled rice production, and soybean production; 70 percent of almond, walnut, and pistachio production; more than 75 percent of cotton production; 40 percent of grapes; 20 percent of cherries; 20 percent of apples; 20 percent of poultry and pork production; and 10 percent of beef production.

If you think about it, there are approximately now 260 preferential trade agreements worldwide. Only 20 of those involve the United States. Every time we have entered into a new trade agreement where we have been able to eliminate tariffs and duties on a lot of our products, we see an explosion in exports into those particular markets. That is why negotiating the strongest possible transpacific trade agreement, as well as the agreement the United States is negotiating with the European Union, has to be a priority. For that, we have to have trade promotion authority.

Trade promotion authority has been the means by which nearly every U.S. free-trade agreement has been negotiated. The idea behind TPA is very simple: Congress sets the negotiating priorities the administration must follow and then requires the administration to consult with Congress during the negotiating process. In return, Congress promises a simple up-or-down vote on the final agreement, instead of a lengthy amendment process that could leave the final agreement looking nothing like the deal the administration negotiated.

The promise of that up-or-down vote on a final agreement is the key. That is what gives our trading partners the confidence they need to put their best offers on the table, which allows for a successful conclusion of negotiations. Trade promotion authority demonstrates that Congress and the administration are on the same page when it comes to the content of trade agree-

ments and that the final agreement will be either accepted or rejected, not amended beyond recognition.

Trade promotion authority expired in 2007. Republicans have been pushing for renewing it ever since. The President is also on board. He called for trade promotion authority in this year's State of the Union Address.

This is an excellent chance, I would add, for Democrats and Republicans to accomplish something significant for the American people and to show that Washington is working again.

Unfortunately, while the President and Republicans are united on this issue, many Senate Democrats continue to oppose trade promotion authority legislation. The chairman of the Senate Finance Committee is currently engaged in negotiations on a TPA bill with the committee's ranking member, the senior Senator from Oregon. I am hopeful and I know a lot of us on the committee and many of us in this Chamber are hopeful that these efforts will yield legislation both Republicans and Democrats can support.

Republicans are very open to suggestions and improvements. In fact, I expect the final agreement will include many elements advocated by the senior Senator from Oregon and other Senate Democrats, such as greater transparency surrounding trade negotiations. However, the one thing Republicans cannot support is an attempt to undermine the core of trade promotion authority—that guaranteed up-or-down vote that gives other countries the confidence to put forward their best offers in trade negotiations. Simply put, we cannot afford to weaken TPA.

I know the senior Senator from Utah, who is the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee—who is on the floor right now; and we will hear from him in just a few minutes—is working very hard to ensure that we have a strong TPA agreement that we can bring to the floor of the Senate, that we can pass through the Congress, and that we can put on the President's desk so that we can enable these trade negotiations to continue in a way that will lead to a conclusion, to a result that is good for American manufacturers and service industries and American farmers and ranchers.

If we fail to pass TPA, which will likely spell the failure of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the United States-European Union trade agreement, we will not be maintaining the status quo. Just because we are not negotiating agreements does not mean other countries will not be. Other countries will secure favorable treatment of their goods, and American goods will fall further and further behind. That is not something we can afford in this economy.

If we pass TPA, on the other hand, that will allow the transpacific trade agreement and the United States-European Union trade agreement to move forward, which means American producers will benefit from new markets