

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

for their goods and American workers will benefit from new jobs and opportunities. Since 2009, exports have accounted for more than 1 million new jobs here in the United States. If we pass the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the United States-European Union trade agreements, we could be looking at more than 1 million more new jobs over the next few years.

It is time to pass TPA, to get these agreements concluded, and to let American workers and businesses start experiencing the benefits. It has been far too long. Mr. President, 2007 is when the last TPA expired. We are losing ground by the day when we are not in the room and a part of negotiating new trade agreements that are beneficial to American businesses, farmers, and ranchers.

I wish to point out one more time that there are approximately now 260 preferential trade agreements worldwide, only 20 of which involve the United States. So if we want to participate in a growing global economy where 95 percent of the world's population lives, we have to become aggressive in creating the trading opportunities that will enable our businesses to prosper, to create good-paying jobs here in the United States, to raise incomes for middle-income families in this country, and to give us as a country an opportunity to lead the world when it comes to an economy that benefits all people—not just those here in the United States but all around the world. We have the wherewithal, the know-how, the technology, the creativity, and the innovation in our economy to make that possible, to make it happen. That is why these trade agreements are so essential.

These trade agreements, as I pointed out, do not happen unless we have trade promotion authority in place to make sure they happen. If we do not have it in place and these trade agreements do not get done, it is not that America—that we are just going to be standing still, we are going to be losing ground as countries around the world that are aggressively trying to negotiate trade agreements and improve the economies of their countries continue to do that, leaving us further and further behind.

So I hope we can get this passed through the Senate Finance Committee, passed through the Senate, the House of Representatives, and on the President's desk where it can be signed into law. The sooner that happens, the better it will be for our economy, for jobs, for American businesses, and for American farmers and ranchers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleagues, and I appreciated the wonderful remarks of the senior Senator from South Dakota, Mr. THUNE. He is working very hard on that committee and really making a difference, as I think most people on the

committee are trying to do. But he makes a difference, and I truly appreciated his remarks today.

I am pleased to join my colleagues on the floor to talk about the importance of Trade Promotion Authority, or TPA, to the health of our Nation's economy. At the beginning of this Congress, I, along with many of my colleagues, stated publicly that trade was one of the few areas where the new Republican Congress would be able to find common ground with President Obama. I still believe that is the case.

I chatted with him just last week—one of the few conversations I have had with him since he has been President—and I was very appreciative. He would like to get this done, and he is right.

The Obama administration is currently negotiating some of the most ambitious trade agreements in our Nation's history. The first is the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, an Asia-Pacific trade agreement being negotiated between the United States and 11 other countries. On the other side of the world, the United States is negotiating a bilateral trade agreement with 28 countries of the European Union; that is called T-TIP.

Together, these two trade agreements have the potential to greatly expand access to U.S. trade with other countries, allowing our job creators to sell more American-made goods and services. They are in demand. We just have to get in the game. This helps us create and support more high-paying export-related jobs at home. Of these two agreements, the TPP negotiations, or the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations, are further advanced. According to administration officials, the agreement could be concluded over the next few months. That is good news.

Now, I wish talk about the bad news. Without renewal of effective TPA procedures, the administration will simply not be able to conclude a strong TPP agreement.

Why is TPA, or trade promotion authority, so important?

TPA is a compact between the Senate, the House, and the administration. Under this compact, the administration agrees to pursue specified objectives and consult with Congress as it negotiates trade agreements. Both the House and the Senate agree to allow for expedited consideration of trade agreements without amendments. This is essential for the conclusion and passage of strong trade agreements.

Put simply, without TPA, our trading partners will not put their best offers on the table because they will have no guarantees the agreement they sign will be the same one Congress will vote on in the end. The distinguished Senator from South Dakota made that very clear. They don't want to agree with our Trade Representative and then have countless amendments in the House and the Senate that could change the whole agreement they had agreed to. That is why trade promotion authority became such an important part of our international relations.

As former Deputy USTR Miriam Sapiro said in a recent speech:

Neither our Asian nor our European partners want to get into the real give-and-take that's necessary to reach a final agreement until they are sure that the president has the authority that he needs to conclude the deal. Absent that, they are content to wait.

In other words, if we want good trade agreements, we must have strong TPA procedures in place, and we need to be clear on one other point: The specifics of those procedures matter. They matter a great deal. This is bipartisanship at its best.

Our goal should not be to pass just any TPA bill. Our goal should be to pass the strongest bill possible. That is the only way to ensure we get the best possible deal out of our trade negotiations, which is, in the end, the purpose of TPA. We have used the same basic TPA structure for every major trade agreement over the last four decades and, quite frankly, the results speak for themselves.

As my colleagues have so eloquently stated today, we do not need new, untested changes to establish TPA procedures that can hamper the process and make it harder for both our negotiators to reach a good deal and for Congress to be able to vote on agreement up or down.

When Republicans took control of the Senate this year and I became the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, I made renewing TPA my top trade priority for this Congress. I set out to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to craft the best possible bill. We already had a good framework in place—the bill I introduced last year with former Chairman Baucus and Chairman Camp, which had broad support in Congress, in the administration, and in the business community.

My goal has been to see if we could improve upon that product in order to broaden support for TPA. I am certainly willing to do that, but I have made it clear throughout this process that I cannot agree to any bill that would dilute the effectiveness of TPA as a tool to negotiate and enact strong trade agreements.

Recently, I had the opportunity to talk personally with President Obama about TPA, as I mentioned. I think he understands the importance of getting a strong TPA bill through Congress. That is why I am willing to work with him to make the advancement of our Nation's trade agenda a higher priority. I am hoping the President will do his part to help persuade the Members of his party to support an effective TPA bill. He says he will, and I believe him.

Make no mistake. Our competitors are not sitting on their laurels when it comes to trade. There are literally hundreds of trade agreements under negotiation throughout the world, and the United States is party to only a few.

This hurts our exporters badly. This bill is really necessary. We need to do

better. We need to do everything we can to ensure that the United States is not only a participant in international trade but a leader. The only way we can do that is by passing a strong TPA bill.

I stand ready and willing to work with the White House and my colleagues in the Senate to get an effective TPA bill introduced out of committee and onto the Senate floor as soon as possible.

We cannot afford to miss this opportunity. This is a grand opportunity for us. It is bipartisan down the line, and I think it would be a great accomplishment for the Congress of the United States to get this done. But, more importantly, it would be a great accomplishment for the President and this administration to have this done. It would give him the tools to do a lot of the things that need to be done.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 178, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 178) to provide justice for the victims of trafficking.

Pending:

Portman amendment No. 270, to amend the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to enable State child protective services systems to improve the identification and assessment of child victims of sex trafficking.

Portman amendment No. 271, to amend the definition of "homeless person" under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to include certain homeless children and youth.

Vitter amendment No. 284 (to amendment No. 271), to amend section 301 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to clarify those classes of individuals born in the United States who are nationals and citizens of the United States at birth.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I did not come down to speak on this particular bill. I am back for week No. 4 of waste of the week.

In recent weeks, I have highlighted what I describe as excess spending of taxpayer dollars. We have talked about double dipping in unemployment insur-

ance, where if we could close this loophole, we could save the taxpayer \$5.7 billion in savings.

We have also talked about duplication in Federal economic development programs. There are 50-some programs that provide for workforce training spread among a number of agencies. Surely we can reduce that number significantly. And if we could do so, we could save the taxpayer \$200 million.

And last week—somewhat tongue in cheek, nevertheless not small change—I talked about a \$387,000 grant issued by the National Institutes of Health in which 18 New Zealand white rabbits were given, four times a day, 30-minute massages to determine whether they would be relieved of some soreness after they were given some physical exercise. Then four massages a day, 30 minutes apiece, costing \$387,000, to prove that a massage helped to make them feel better or removed some of those aches and pains.

I think we could have asked any athlete from any college. As we are moving into college basketball's March Madness and Final Four that we all engage in at this time of year, we could ask any college athlete, or any person for that matter who is doing work in the yard: Do you think 4 30-minute massages a day would help you feel a little better and help you with some of those aches and pains? Do we need to spend \$387,000 of taxpayer dollars in order to prove this and give rabbits massages?

So up we go with the chart. Waste of the week. This is week No. 4, and I would like to talk about a so-called bonus that has been given by our Federal Government that is quite egregious.

I am sure many look forward to a potential bonus at the end of the year—though it doesn't apply in our business here. A bonus sounds like something that comes along with something that was earned, but what if it was a bonus you didn't earn? Is it still a bonus or does it become fraud?

Internal Revenue Service Commissioner John Koskinen recently confirmed to the Senate that unless action is taken, an amnesty bonus would be available to millions who have broken our immigration laws. All of this stems from the President's announcement in November of 2014 to grant 3 years of tentative legal status to as many as 4 million individuals who crossed America's borders into this country illegally. Fortunately, President Obama's Executive amnesty has been temporarily blocked by a Federal court. Hopefully, that blockage will survive all legal challenges to undo it. But if this amnesty plan moves forward, 4 million illegal individuals will be granted Social Security numbers.

Why does this matter? Well, when you are granted a Social Security number, it triggers certain benefits, including eligibility for the earned income tax credit for up to 3 prior years in future tax filing years.

The earned income tax credit is a benefit for working people who have low to moderate income. It is an incentive and a reward for those who choose to work, and it does help to reduce the number of those who are dependent on government welfare programs. It allows some individuals to receive payments from the U.S. Treasury just by filing a tax return. It reduces the amount of tax an individual owes and it may also provide a tax refund.

Why is this issue qualified as waste of the week? Since the President is trying to legalize an additional 4 million individuals, if his action is upheld by the court, 4 million people will now have retroactive access to this benefit and taxpayers foot the bill for these 4 million illegal immigrants who will be in a position to earn this tax credit.

The Joint Committee on Taxation says this so-called amnesty bonus for those who have come into our country illegally will drain about \$2.1 billion from the United States Treasury.

I am for legal immigration. The United States has a rich history as a destination where people from all over the world can come to make a better life for themselves. We are a nation of immigrants. As a matter of fact, I am the son of an immigrant. My mother came here with her family, and it has been the narrative of our family. Legal immigration is what has made America the great prosperous country it is today. But we also are a nation of laws, and Congress should help ensure that legal immigrants to our country can benefit from the opportunities they need to succeed, but that doesn't include rewarding those who are gaming our immigration system to receive benefits they do not legally qualify for.

To address this matter, I have joined with Senator GRASSLEY and several other of my colleagues to introduce legislation that would correct this issue. If we can correct this issue, we will save the taxpayers an estimated \$2.1 billion in future spending.

So up we go with the thermometer here, and we will be adding another \$2.1 billion to the money that can be saved our taxpayers by eliminating duplication, by pursuing awards that are not legally given, by looking at the way the Federal Government wastes money by giving rabbits back rubs, and we are going to continue to fill this up until we hopefully reach the \$100 billion goal. That is not small change.

I continue to hear from Hoosiers and others who write and say: Yes, we haven't been able to address the big issues of debt and deficit, but we can go after government waste. And those who say we can't afford to cut spending a nickel because we have cut so much so far clearly have not paid attention to the billions of dollars that can be saved the taxpayers simply by addressing the waste and illegal use of the taxpayer money.

I look forward to sharing some more of these in coming weeks, and I thank the sponsor of the bill here for giving