

Senator MURRAY for her leadership, and Senator REID, Senator MCCONNELL, and Senator CORNYN. The two of us have worked on this issue for years. Finally, we are going to be able to move these really important bills forward.

What this compromise does is really set up two funds. The first uses Senator CORNYN's fund, which is fees on perpetrators, and it uses that for things such as shelters and law enforcement, things that we had envisioned would be used for people to combat sex trafficking. The second fund is a medical fund. It is really based on the same principle that we used with the SGR fund that we just voted on.

That bill passed 92 to 8. The fund will receive a minimum of \$5 million and would be matched up to \$30 million, as funding in the Cornyn fund goes up. It really is a parallel fund but serving the exact same purpose.

This is the way we were able to eliminate extraneous provisions but still keep the spirit of this really important bill and allow us to move on to my bill, the Stop Exploitation Through Trafficking Act, which really is about not prosecuting kids under 18. There was huge bipartisan support over in the House. It passed unanimously through the Judiciary Committee and will be one of the amendments to this bill.

Again, I want to thank Senator MURRAY for her leadership. We have been a team on this. We have been able to work with Senator CORNYN and our friends across the aisle to get this done. It is also time—I will end by saying—to confirm the next Attorney General of the United States, Loretta Lynch.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I am pleased as well to hear that we have an agreement on the human trafficking legislation. It is something that should be above politics. Unfortunately, anything around here, it seems, gets sucked into politics from time to time, but it is important that we get an agreement that will allow us to advance this legislation.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS OF THE REPUBLICAN-LED SENATE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I am pleased to hear of yet another accomplishment that has happened in the Senate since we have gotten things opened up and functioning again.

I wish to say that last year when Republicans were running for office, we promised that if we were reelected, we would get Washington working again for American families. That wasn't a campaign slogan; that was a commitment.

I am proud to report that after 100 days in office, Republicans are making significant progress. To start, Republicans have the Senate functioning again on a basic level.

From an operations standpoint day to day, over the past few years when

the Democrats controlled the law-making process in the Senate, it largely ground to a halt. Instead of bills being drafted in committee and then brought to the floor for open debate and amendment, bills were crafted behind closed doors. Members in the minority party were shut out of the process, and so were many rank-and-file Democrats. Last year, Democratic leadership allowed a total of 15 amendment votes—slightly over 1 amendment vote per month in the world's greatest deliberative body, known for unlimited amendment and unlimited debate. Contrast that with the first 100 days under Republican control. In the first 3½ months of the 114th Congress, the Republican-led Senate has held more than 100 amendment rollcall votes. More than half of those votes have been on Democratic amendments.

When you shut one party out of the legislative process in the Senate, you shut out the voices of millions of Americans. Republicans experienced that under Democratic control, and we were determined to make sure things were different this year.

Since Republicans took control of the Senate, Members of both parties have had the opportunity to make their voices heard, and we are seeing a lot more bipartisan legislation as a result. In the past 3½ months, the Republican-led Senate has approved 12 bipartisan bills. We have passed bipartisan legislation to approve the Keystone Pipeline. We have passed a bipartisan bill to prevent suicides among veterans. We have passed a bipartisan reauthorization of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Program and a bipartisan bill to provide restitution for victims of child pornography. Last week, we passed the first significant bipartisan reform of Medicare in years.

Mr. President, last week also brought the announcement of a new bipartisan agreement, a bill to reauthorize trade promotion authority.

With 96 percent of the world's population and consumers outside the borders of the United States, trade is essential to economic growth.

Since 2009, increasing exports have accounted for more than 1.6 million new jobs in the United States. Manufacturing jobs that depend on exports pay on average 13 percent to 18 percent more.

U.S. farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers rely on access to foreign markets. In my home State of South Dakota alone, exports support more than 15,000 jobs in industries ranging from farming and ranching to machinery and electronics. Farmers and ranchers in South Dakota, where agriculture is the No. 1 industry, depend on exports for a substantial part of their income. Exports of major South Dakota crops, such as soybeans and corn, have soared over the past few years. In fact, in 2013, total agricultural exports from South Dakota totaled \$3.8 billion.

Previous free- and fair-trade agreements have been a boon to America's

farmers, ranchers, and workers. In 2013, countries with which our Nation has free-trade agreements purchased 12 times more goods per capita from the United States than non-free-trade agreement countries.

Since 1934, almost all of the U.S. free-trade agreements have been negotiated using trade promotion authority or a similar streamlined process. Trade promotion authority is designed to put the United States in the strongest possible position when negotiating trade agreements.

Under TPA, Congress sets guidelines for trade negotiations and outlines the priorities the administration must follow. In return, Congress promises a simple up-or-down vote on the resulting trade agreement instead of a long amendment process that could leave the final deal looking nothing like the original one. That simple up-or-down vote is the key: It lets our negotiating partners know that Congress and trade negotiators are on the same page when it comes to the content of trade agreements, which gives other countries the confidence they need to put their best offers on the table. That, in turn, allows for a successful and timely conclusion of negotiations.

Currently, the administration is negotiating two major trade agreements that have the potential to vastly expand the market for American goods and services in the EU and in the Pacific.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership is being negotiated with a number of Asia-Pacific nations, including Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, and currently Vietnam. Currently, American goods face heavy tariffs in many of these countries. Tariffs on consumer goods in Trans-Pacific Partnership countries reach as high as 85 percent, while tariffs on agricultural products range even higher. Poultry tariffs in Trans-Pacific Partnership countries, for example, go up to 240 percent. That is a tremendous burden on American producers.

American farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, and consumers would all benefit from the conclusion of the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement and the United States-European Union trade agreement. These trade deals remove many of the barriers currently facing U.S. products in these regions, which would allow American goods to compete on a level playing field with their foreign counterparts. Reauthorizing trade promotion authority is essential to bringing these two agreements to a successful and timely conclusion.

The bipartisan trade promotion authority bill that was introduced last week by the senior Senators from Utah and Oregon reauthorizes this key tool and includes a number of important updates, such as provisions to strengthen

transparency of the negotiating process and ensure that the American people stay informed. It also contains provisions I pushed for to require negotiators to ensure that trade agreements protect digital trade as well as trade in physical goods and services. With the importance of digital trade in the 21st-century economy, it is essential that any new trade promotion reauthorization include new guidelines specifically targeted at digital trade. I previously introduced legislation to help ensure that the free flow of digital goods and services is protected, and I am pleased that the bipartisan deal that was reached includes many of the measures I have advocated.

The best way to solve the challenges facing our Nation is for Democrats and Republicans to come together to develop solutions. We have done a lot of that so far in the Republican-led Senate, and I look forward to doing a lot more of it.

I hope those Democrats who have opposed trade promotion authority in the past will join the White House and Senate Republicans to pass this important bill for American workers and businesses and make the TPA reauthorization our next bipartisan achievement.

Mr. President, I wish to add that we also have a bill that would require Congress to approve any nuclear arms agreement with Iran—also a very big bipartisan bill, as it was reported out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

These are things which can be accomplishments for the American people. It starts with getting the Senate functioning and operating again, where people have the opportunity to come to the floor and debate these issues, to offer amendments, and to get those amendments voted on. That is what our commitment has been in the Senate. I argue—and I think the record bears this out—that it is making a very consequential difference in terms of the things we are able to get done for the American people. I certainly hope we can continue that pattern.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana.

STEVE GLEASON ACT

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of S. 984, the Steve Gleason Act, to help thousands of victims of ALS and other related diseases all across the United States.

This bipartisan, straightforward bill would give immediate relief to those folks with ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease, who are facing significant problems accessing necessary medical equipment as a result of three recent changes in Medicare that prohibit access on every level.

It is important to note that this wasn't a problem until the administration governing Medicare made it a problem a few months ago. They affirmatively changed policy, changed

rules, and created these significant access problems. We are talking about devices that are critical for patients who have lost their ability to speak, to communicate directly with friends, families, doctors, to call 911 in case of emergency, to write letters to loved ones. These devices allow these patients to speak and communicate in light of their loss of voice and other functions.

This issue was first brought before Congress last year when thousands of patients, patient advocates, and device manufacturers brought to our attention the devastating consequences of this new Medicare policy. Patients were actually having their devices taken away. Many were not allowed to own their devices or were not permitted to unlock their devices in order to use all of the technological functions, all of which continue to be problems and to prevent patients from leading much more independent lives. As a result, Members on both sides of the aisle wrote a letter with more than 220 Members advocating on behalf of this patient population to reverse the Medicare administration decision.

The Senate has that same opportunity for bipartisanship today, to support this legislation on a strong bipartisan basis. In that spirit, I thank Senator KLOBUCHAR of Minnesota and Senator KING of Maine, who have been completely supportive and aggressive in getting this bill to the finish line. They understand the importance of putting patients first and fixing this extremely misguided and harmful Medicare regulation that has had a truly devastating impact on the lives of ALS patients, as well as stroke victims and other folks facing significant paralysis.

On Tuesday evening, before the Senate overwhelmingly passed a permanent doc fix, the Senator from Oregon and I reached an agreement that he would run the hotline on this legislation, the Steve Gleason Act, and pass this bill for our constituents. That is what we are working on today, and that is what I absolutely hope to complete today to get this necessary, important, bipartisan language across the finish line.

Of course, the ALS Association, a national network group, is completely supportive.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter dated January 27, 2015, on this topic from the ALS Association.

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

JANUARY 27, 2015.

Hon. CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.
Hon. DAVID VITTER,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE MCMORRIS RODGERS AND SENATOR VITTER: I am writing on behalf of The ALS Association to express our strong support for your legislation that

would help preserve access to speech generating devices (SGDs) and accessories such as eye tracking technology that are needed to access SGDs by people with ALS who have lost mobility. The Association applauds your leadership on these critically important issues and is committed to continuing to work with you to enact this legislation as soon as possible.

As you know, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has taken a number of different actions that limit the ability of people with ALS to access SGDs and eye tracking technology. This includes: issuing a “coverage reminder” that would have prohibited coverage for SGDs that include non-speech technology such as email, internet access and environmental controls; routine denials of coverage for eye tracking; and implementing a “capped rental” payment system that requires people with ALS to first rent SGDs for a period of 13 months before owning the device. These policies have created significant problems for people with ALS who rely on SGDs for all of their communications needs. For example, under capped rental if a person is admitted to hospice, a hospital or a nursing facility during the rental period, Medicare payment for the SGD will cease. Moreover, capped rental also prohibits a person with ALS from upgrading their SGD during the rental period, which means they are not able to access email, the internet and environmental controls that are so critical to the day-to-day lives of people with ALS.

The Association strongly supported your efforts and those of nearly 200 of your colleagues who wrote to CMS expressing concern about these issues last year and we have worked with CMS and other stakeholders on these issues as well. We are grateful that CMS did take action to rescind the coverage reminder and initiate the process of revising the National Coverage Determination for SGDs. However, we do not anticipate that process to be completed until late July 2015 and it may not address the problems created by capped rental or denials of coverage for eye tracking. In short, these policies are having a significant negative impact on the lives of people living with ALS today and there is an urgent need to take action now. People with ALS, who have been robbed of the ability to speak and who will lose their life to ALS in an average of just two to five years, simply do not have time to wait.

Your legislation is a responsible approach to address an immediate problem and would help ensure the Medicare program meets the needs of the people it was created to serve. By restoring a person's ability to purchase an SGD and ensuring coverage for eye tracking technologies, your legislation will enable people with ALS to access the SGDs they need when and where they need them and ensure they also have access to the technologies that are so vital to living with this disease. We look forward to continuing to work with you in support of people with ALS.

Thank you again for your efforts to champion these critical issues and help ensure Medicare policies do not take away the voice of people with ALS.

Sincerely,

STEVE GIBSON,
*Chief Mission Strategy and Public Policy
Officer, The ALS Association.*

Mr. VITTER. The association has reached out to members all across the country and put in very concrete terms what this means to their members.

I wish to give one brief but very moving and significant example. It happens to be a woman from Oregon, the State of the ranking member of the committee. She was diagnosed with ALS in