

back in those days, and he did the same thing—just ignored them, didn't even schedule them for a hearing. Senator LEAHY has been to the floor many times—our past chair of the Judiciary Committee, now ranking member of the Judiciary Committee—talking about how bad that used to be, and now he is talking about how bad it is even today.

So Restrepo and others will not be on the agenda. Despite the fact that this Philadelphia-based seat is a judicial emergency, they just ignore people like Restrepo. They say: We only have a few people on the calendar. Why aren't there more on the calendar?

Because they won't schedule hearings. It is so unfair.

Now Restrepo won't be on the agenda in spite of the fact that the junior Senator from Pennsylvania said Restrepo would be a "superb addition to the third circuit." Why doesn't the junior Senator from Pennsylvania talk about this man being held up by his own party? There is no reason he has been held up for 6 months other than the Republicans simply want to do everything they can to create problems for President Obama. But it is not a problem for President Obama. President Obama is doing just fine. It is a problem for the people I have talked about—the prosecutors, those who are accused of crimes, plaintiffs and defendants in civil cases, and, of course, the judges.

After having heard the statement from the junior Senator from Pennsylvania, I wonder what Pennsylvanians are thinking. Are they left wondering why this qualified judicial candidate is not moving forward and not a word from the junior Senator from Pennsylvania? Not a word.

It appears Republicans are heeding calls from the far right to retaliate against President Obama by blocking judges. Republicans couldn't defend their trying to shut down the Department of Homeland Security. They tried. They tried to block Loretta Lynch's nomination, and they couldn't get that done. So now they want to block President Obama's judges.

Our courts should be above political gamesmanship. Qualified judicial nominees such as Mr. Restrepo deserve a vote in the Senate.

President Bush's judges were considered fairly when I was the majority leader, and there is no one who can say that nominees are now being handled fairly. It is certainly not unreasonable for Democrats to expect the same measure of cooperation and fairness from Republicans that I gave them. The American judicial system should not be taking a backseat to Republican politics here in the Senate, in our Nation's Capitol. If it were only the judges they are holding up, that would be one thing, but Republican Senators are holding up basically all his nominations, with rare exception. For example, the chief law enforcement officer of this country, Loretta Lynch, who is well qualified in every way—ex-

perience, education, and character—was held up for 6 months. If what they did in her case wasn't bad enough, they now are not allowing her to have the people she needs around her. They are not allowing a vote on her No. 1 assistant. It is unfair and just too bad that justice delayed is justice denied. I am sorry to say that is where we find ourselves today.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

#### IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT AND BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL TRADE PRIORITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Senate is now nearing completion of the bipartisan Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act. This is a bipartisan bill which is based on an important principle: that the American people, through the Congress they elect, deserve a say on one of the most important issues of our time.

This act would require that any agreement reached with Iran be submitted to Congress for a review. It would require that Congress be given time to hold hearings and to take a vote to approve or disapprove of the agreement before congressional sanctions could be lifted. It would give Congress more power to rapidly impose sanctions if Iran does cheat.

Many wish the bill were stronger. I don't disagree with them. But this is a piece of legislation worthy of our support. It offers the best chance we have to provide the American people and the Congress they elect with the power to weigh in on a vital issue. We will pursue other opportunities to address Iran's full-spectrum campaign to increase its sphere of influence in the broader Middle East as well.

I look forward to Senators of both parties coming together to pass this bipartisan Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act soon. Once we do, the Senate will take up another measure designed to hold the administration accountable: the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act. This bipartisan bill is about a lot more than just expanding Congress's oversight authority. It is about delivering prosperity for the middle class and supporting jobs. It is about helping American workers sell more of what they make and farmers sell more of what they grow. It is about eliminating unfair rules in other countries that discriminate against American workers and American jobs. Remember, the United States already has one of the most open markets in the world, but other countries maintain unfair barriers against American goods and services—barriers that trade agreements can reduce or even eliminate to make things fairer for America.

That is why the United States is currently involved in negotiations with Europe and several nations in the Pacific such as Japan—in order to break down barriers to goods stamped "Made in America." That is the main point here. We want to knock down barriers to our goods stamped with "Made in America" to be sold in other countries.

One estimate shows that trade agreements with Europe and the Pacific could support as many as 1.4 million additional jobs in our country, including over 18,000 in Kentucky alone. But in order to get there, we will first need to lay down some clear and fair rules of the road for our trade negotiators. That is what the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act would do.

First, it would make Congress's priorities clear, issuing specific objectives for the administration's trade negotiators.

Second, it would mandate transparency, forcing the administration to consult regularly with Congress and stakeholders.

And it would reaffirm the supremacy of this body and require our exclusive approval before trade agreements are enacted.

The Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act is good bipartisan legislation that was endorsed overwhelmingly in the Finance Committee 20 to 6. It is good for the middle class, it is good for manufacturers, and, yes, it is very good for farmers.

Here is what one Kentucky constituent—a corn, wheat, and soybean farmer from Spencer County—recently wrote to say on the issue:

We need free trade to compete with grain farms in South America. Dozens of people have jobs as a direct result of our small business: Input suppliers, truckers, mechanics and traders, just to name a few.

He went on.

Help me and all these people by expanding trade and consumption globally. Our future depends on it.

Well, I couldn't agree more with that farmer from Spencer County. Our future does depend on cultivating better opportunities for American goods, American crops, and American workers in the 21st century.

I look forward to the Senate turning to the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act very soon.

#### 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, with the time equally divided and controlled

between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half.

The Senator from Iowa.

#### FIGHT AGAINST ISIS

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, as we continue to fight against ISIS and those radicalized by them, I rise today to urge my colleagues to join efforts to provide direct assistance to a critical partner in that fight—the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Yesterday, I joined Senator BARBARA BOXER of California to do just that. We introduced bipartisan legislation to provide temporary authority for the President to provide weapons directly to Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces in the fight against ISIS. This legislation builds upon a similar bipartisan House effort led by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman ED ROYCE and Ranking Member ELIOT ENGEL. The bill's 3-year authorization seeks to reduce delays in arming Peshmerga forces to fight ISIS, while still maintaining consultation with the Iraqi Government.

Beginning in the first gulf war, the Iraqi Kurds and their Peshmerga forces have played a vital role in supporting U.S. interests and a free Iraq, despite limited means of doing so.

Since August 2014, the Kurds have provided sanctuary to nearly 2 million ethnic and religious minorities in Iraqi Kurdistan, and they have been the only force to hold its ground against ISIS in northern Iraq.

Currently, by law, the United States must provide support to the Iraqi Kurds through the Iraqi central government in Baghdad, which has often not been timely or adequate in the past. This has had a negative impact on the Kurds' ability to defend Iraqi territory and provide security for those Iraqis and Syrians who have sought refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Last November, Secretary of State John Kerry said that if Chairman ROYCE wanted to change current law—to "fix it"—that he invited him to do so. Well, that is exactly what this legislation does.

It makes it the policy of the United States to provide direct assistance to the Kurdistan Regional Government to combat ISIS. We do that because we believe that defeating ISIS is critical to maintaining an inclusive and unified Iraq and that the Iraqi Kurds are key in that goal, as well as to help to end the humanitarian crisis in Iraq through their support of over 1.6 million displaced persons from Iraq and Syria.

The legislation preserves the President's ability to notify the Iraqi Government before weapons, equipment, defense services or related training is provided to Iraqi Kurdish forces.

It ensures this emergency authorization does not construct a precedent of providing direct support to organizations other than a country or an inter-

national organization. Finally, it works toward accountability by requiring a report to Congress on U.S. weapons provided to the Iraqi Government which have ended up in the hands of Iranian controlled and supported Shia militias or foreign terrorist groups.

ISIS is deadly and determined, and Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces—our critical partner in the fight against ISIS—need U.S. weapons as quickly as possible.

This 3-year authorization would bolster efforts against ISIS, which are critical to maintaining a unified and stable Iraq and imperative to our national security interests. We simply cannot afford to have future delays at this critical moment in the battle.

I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this much-needed legislation to arm the Iraqi Kurds in the fight against ISIS.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

#### AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, Thursday a week ago I had the privilege, as a member of the Finance Committee, to serve on the markup of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, trade promotion authority, and trade adjustment and assistance.

This past Saturday, I was given the opportunity to give the Republican response on the radio, and I talked about trade promotion authority. I have been privileged to be ranking member and chairman at one time of the African Affairs Subcommittee. I have traveled back and forth to the continent of Africa, seen the opportunities for trade, business, and exchange with the African people.

I came to the Congress in 1999. In that year, I voted for trade promotion authority for President Bill Clinton, a Democrat. Later, I voted for trade promotion authority for President Bush, a Republican. And I proudly will vote for trade promotion authority for President Obama, a Democrat, because trade is not a partisan issue. It should not be nor should it ever be a partisan issue. It should be an issue of the American people's employment opportunities and jobs in the future. Trade is the cement that holds together the diplomacy and the agreements between countries to work together, play together, and not fight together and not have armed conflict. Trade is important to the security of the United States of America and, in fact, the rest of the world.

But I don't want to talk about trade promotion authority today. I want to talk about the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

Africa is the continent of the 21st century for the United States of America, with 1.5 billion mouths to feed, a number of votes at the United Nations, in terms of the African countries, but most importantly, it has the rarest

earth minerals and the natural resources so important to us and the rest of the world. Africa is a gold mine waiting to be mined. But it is not one that we abuse, like the Chinese are abusing it. It is one where we share in prosperity.

When China goes into Africa, they bring their own workers, pay their own workers with Chinese currency, extract the rarest minerals—oil and petroleum and natural resources—and then leave.

When America goes, we invest in the human capital with PEPFAR to reduce the rate of AIDS, and we invest in the Millennium Challenge Corporation to bring jobs, opportunities, and a lack of corruption to the African people.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act is a godsend for the continent of Africa, but it is a godsend to the country of the United States of America. In the future, Africa will become our greatest trading partner if we handle it right.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act that will be before us, along with TPA, is a 10-year extension of our goal. That is important, because it gives predictability to the African countries and the United States. But, more importantly, it gives us the opportunity to file cases with the Trade Representative against those countries that are not playing by the rules.

South Africa is a perfect example. They have blocked access to their market to poultry from the United States of America, with arbitrary and capricious blockades to keep our poultry from going in.

Senator COONS from Delaware and I from Georgia, two big poultry States, have confronted the South Africans. We know that under the new AGOA, when it is passed and ratified by this Congress and by the African countries as well, it will give us the opportunity to file a petition to ask the Trade Representative to file a case to open up the South African practices. And if they are found to be not right—or wrong or corrupt—then we can block South Africa's participation in parts of the AGOA or all of the AGOA. In other words, the AGOA is going to have consequences, much as the Millennium Challenge account does.

Today, when America makes an investment in a foreign country in Africa for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, there are consequences if they don't end corruption, if they don't have private sector participation, if they don't have the rule of law governing their project. We pull the Millennium Challenge Corporation out, and they don't get another grant.

Look at the nation of Ghana, which is now working on its third grant, or the nation of Benin, which is working on its second. Both are improving their infrastructure and their ability to trade and produce with America because of a joint venture between our country and those countries.

I urge all my colleagues in the House and the Senate to adopt the African