trade agreement is important to many of us. We want to make sure it is included on the floor of the Senate.

Equally so, we want to make sure that trade agreements are enforceable. It wasn't that long ago that we had thriving steel production companies in America that were victimized by many foreign countries that started dumping steel in the United States.

What does it mean to dump steel? These countries—Brazil, Japan, and Russia—were selling steel in the United States at prices lower than the cost of production. Why? They knew they could run the Americans out of business—and they did. By the time we filed an unfair trade grievance, went through the hearings and won our case, the American companies disappeared. Enforcement is an important part of any conversation about trade. We want to know from Senator HATCH and the Republicans who bring this to the floor, if we are going to enforce the trade agreements so Americans are treated fairly.

I think that is a pretty legitimate question. Until it is answered, there is uncertainty. Maybe the vote at 2:30 will reflect it. I hope we can get an answer before 2:30, but if not, then soon after, on how Senator MCCONNELL wants to bring this issue to the floor.

HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, May 31—today is May 12. On May 31, the Federal highway trust fund authorization expires. What it means is at that point in time, the Federal Government will stop sending Federal dollars back to our States to build highways and bridges and support buses and mass transit—May 31.

What are we going to do about it? We have 19 days to do something about it. Sadly, we know what we are going to do about it. The Republicans who control the House and the Senate have failed to come up with any means of extending the highway trust fund. What they are going to do probably is ask us for a short-term extension—1 month, 2 months.

The reason we think this will happen is that in the past 6 years, there have been 32 extensions of the highway trust fund. We used to pass highway trust fund bills to last 6 years, for obvious reasons. You cannot build highways a month at a time. You have to know you have money that is going to be there for years to build a highway, to repair a bridge, to make certain you have new mass transit modernization. But the Republicans have been unable to reauthorize the highway trust fund for any period of time. They want to extend it 30 days at a time, 60 days at a time.

There are some realities that we need to accept. We cannot patch our way to prosperity in America. You cannot fill enough potholes to build a highway. If we are going to accept our responsibility to be a great nation and a great leader in the world economy, we need an infrastructure to support it.

The Republican failure to extend the highway trust fund for 5 or 6 years, sadly, is going to cost us jobs in America—not just good-paying construction jobs but jobs in businesses that count on infrastructure. I have them all over Illinois. There are thousands of workers in Illinois who depend on them. But because the Republicans have failed to come up with an extension of the highway trust fund, we are going to limp along here and, sadly, not meet our national obligation to create an infrastructure to support our economy.

I am hoping that cooler heads will prevail and leadership will prevail, and that the Republican leadership in the House and the Senate—they are in the majority in both Chambers—will step forward with a plan to create a highway trust fund for 6 years. The President has; he put it on the table. Republicans rejected it. They have no alternative—none.

Let's get down to business. Let's put America back to work. Let's create the infrastructure we need to build our economy.

Mr. President, how much time do I have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democrats have 5 minutes remaining.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to make a statement on Syria and humanitarian concerns in Syria, but it will take longer than that. I know my colleague from Vermont is here, and I would like to yield the remaining 5 minutes.

Mr. SANDERS. Let me say this, if I might. If I can get unanimous consent to speak after Senator THUNE, that would be fine, and I would yield back to the Senator.

How is that?

Mr. DURBIN. If the Senator wants to make that unanimous consent request——

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 15 minutes after Senator THUNE speaks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I believe the previous Presiding Officer suggested I had 5 minutes remaining of Democratic time at this point.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN SYRIA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to say, very briefly, a word about the situation in Syria. On May 13, 1994, a Senator from Illinois named Paul Simon was then chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa. His ranking Republican was Senator Jim Jeffords of Vermont. Senators Jim Jeffords and Paul Simon had been told that there was a looming genocide about to occur in Rwanda. They went on the phone together and spoke to U.N. General Romeo Dallaire in Kigali, Rwanda, in May of 1994. They asked: What can we do to stop the killing in Rwanda? General Dallaire said: If you would send 5,000 uniformed troops, I could stop this genocide.

Senators Simon and Jeffords wrote to the Clinton White House immediately at that time and asked for the administration to call on the United Nations to act.

Their letter said in part: ''Obviously there are risks involved but we cannot continue to sit idly by while this tragedy continues to unfold.''

The Senators received no reply from the White House. In less than 8 weeks, 800,000 Rwandans were massacred. Today, President William Clinton acknowledges that he should have done more—we should have done more. What happened in Rwanda was a classic genocide. Today, what is happening in Syria may not meet the classic definition of a genocide, but it certainly meets every standard and every definition as the looming humanitarian crisis of our time. The question before us and the United States is this: What will we do?

I think it has reached the point where we must act. That is why I have joined three of my colleagues—fellow Democrat TIM KAINE of Virginia and Republicans LINDSEY GRAHAM of South Carolina and JOHN MCCAIN of Arizona—and we have written to President Obama, urging him to call together world leaders and to establish a humanitarian zone—a safe zone, a no-fly zone—in Syria, where modern medical treatment can be provided and displaced persons can escape. We think it should be done under the auspices—I do—of the United Nations and that the United States can join other countries in providing a defensive security force.

We need to turn to our NATO allies, such as Turkey. We need to reach out to Saudi Arabia, even Iran, and try to find an international consensus to spare the suffering and death which has been occurring now for years. We do not know the exact number of casualties. We estimate that some 400,000 may have died in Syria. Millions have been displaced.

This is a picture of just one of the refugee camps to which the people of Syria have fled. I have visited camps such as this in Turkey. They are in Lebanon and Jordan. They cannot accommodate all of the people who are evacuating that country.

Once every few months a friend of mine comes to visit in Chicago. He is an extraordinary man. His name is Dr. Sahloul. He heads up a group of Syrian Americans who travel to Syria on a regular basis. They have to sneak into the country—this war-torn country. As doctors, they are providing basic medical care to the victims of the violence that is taking place in Syria.

Dr. Sahloul brings heartbreaking photographs to show me. The last photographs were of children who had been victims of barrel bombs, which Bashar al-Assad, the leader of Syria, drops on

his own people. These are literally garbage cans filled with munitions and explosives that explode, killing civilian populations. The photos showed children who had been maimed, lost their limbs, and some had been killed by these barrel bombs that continue. Now Assad has decided to up the ante. He is including chlorine gas in the barrel bombs as well.

These doctors try to save these children and save these victims. Many times they are operating on tables in abandoned schools. They are begging for medicines, which are at a high premium. Many times they are not successful. What will we do? What can the United States do?

I hope that we can be part of an effort—an international effort—to provide safe zones for medical treatment and for the displaced persons in Syria. I hope to join with others on a bipartisan basis in urging that alternative.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, later today the Senate will vote on whether to proceed to a bill that was reported out of the Senate Finance Committee, on which I serve, the trade promotion authority legislation. What is so remarkable about this is that we are on the cusp here in the Senate of passing a major piece of legislation—bipartisan legislation on which a Republican majority in the Senate is working with a Democratic President to give him trade promotion authority—something that would be very good for our economy. If the Democrats in the Senate do not blow it, this could be a major hallmark achievement of this Congress. But my understanding is there is an effort on the other side now to prevent us from even getting on the bill to debate it. I hope that as Democrats contemplate that move, they will think long and hard about what they will be doing. Not only will they be undermining their own President, who is very much for this, but they will be hurting the American economy. Almost every President, literally back to FDR, has had trade promotion authority in which he has the ability to negotiate trade agreements with our trading partners in a way that Congress ultimately has to approve but in a way that expedites and gives the maximum amount of leverage to get the best trade agreement possible.

We are taking up that legislation, hopefully, later today. But it is all going to depend on Senate Democrats and whether they want to proceed to this bill or not. I certainly hope, as I said, that they will come to the conclusion that it is in the best interests of our country, of our economy, and certainly, I think, in the best interests of creating a bipartisan achievement here in which they are working with their own President and with Republicans here in the Senate.

With 96 percent of the world's consumers outside the borders of the United States, trade is essential to growing our economy and opening new markets for products marked ''Made in the USA.''

Over the past few years, exports have been a bright spot in our economy, supporting an increasing number of American jobs each and every year. In fact, in 2014 exports supported 11.7 million U.S. jobs and made up 13 percent of our Nation's economy.

In my home State of South Dakota alone, exports support more than 15,000 jobs in industries that range from farming and ranching to machinery and electronics. We need to continue to open markets around the globe to American goods and services. The best way to do that is through new trade agreements. Countries with which we have free and fair trade agreements purchase substantially more from us than other countries.

In fact, in 2013, free-trade agreement countries purchased 12 times more goods and services per capita from the United States than non-free-trade agreement countries. Let me restate that. In 2013, those countries with which we have a free-trade agreement purchased 12 times more goods per capita from the United States than those countries with which we do not have a free-trade agreement.

It is not just American farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers who benefit from trade agreements. American consumers benefit as well. Trade agreements give American families access to a greater variety of goods at lower prices.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that trade increases American families' purchasing power by $10,000 annually. For American workers, increased trade means more opportunity and increased access to high-paying jobs. Manufacturing jobs tied to exports pay on average 13 to 18 percent more than wages in other areas of our economy.

Unfortunately, while trade agreements were proliferated around the globe over the past several years, the United States has not signed a new trade agreement in 5 years. Altogether, the United States has just 14 trade agreements currently in effect. That is a lot of lost opportunity for American workers and businesses, since trade agreements have proved to be the best way to increase demand for American products and services.

A big reason for the lack of trade agreements in recent years is the fact that trade promotion authority expired in 2007. As I said earlier, since 1934—you have to go back to the administration of FDR—almost all of the United States' 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 it comes to negotiating trade agreements.

Under TPA, Congress sets guidelines for trade negotiations and outlines the priorities the administration has to 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 what was negotiated. 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, which gives other countries the confidence they need to put their best offers on the table, and that in turn allows for a successful and timely conclusion to 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 European Union 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 Vietnam.

If this agreement is done right, there could be huge benefits for American agriculture, among other industries. Currently, American agricultural products face heavy tariffs in many Trans-Pacific Partnership countries. Poultry tariffs in TPP countries, for example, can reach a staggering 240 percent. Reducing the barriers to American agricultural products in these countries would have enormous benefits for American farmers and ranchers.

Agricultural producers in my State of South Dakota have contacted me to tell me how trade benefits their industries and to urge support for trade promotion authority as the most effective way to secure trade agreements that will benefit South Dakota farmers and ranchers.

The leader of the South Dakota Dairy Producers Association wrote to me about the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, which could have significant benefits for South Dakota dairy farmers, and urged me to vote in favor of trade promotion authority. He said the Trans-Pacific Partnership talks ''have the potential to be positive for our dairy industry, but only if the U.S. insists on settling for nothing less than a balanced deal that delivers net trade benefits for the dairy industry. Passing TPA is a key part of getting there.'' That is from a dairy producer in my State of South Dakota.

Mr. President, passing TPA is a key part of getting there. Neither the Trans-Pacific Partnership nor the United States-European Union trade agreement is likely to be completed in a timely fashion without trade promotion authority. If we want to make sure that trade negotiations achieve the goals of American farmers and manufacturers, trade promotion authority is essential.

The bipartisan bill we are considering on the Senate floor this week reauthorizes trade promotion authority,