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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O Lord, our rock, hear our praise today, for Your faithfulness endures to all generations. You hear our prayers and surround us with Your mercy. You are our strength and our shield. Listen to the melody of our gratitude, for You are the center of our joy.

Lord, thank You for illuminating our paths with Your precepts, dispelling the darkness of doubt and fear. Today, guide our lawmakers. Be their shepherd in these dangerous times. Give them eyes to see that You have not left Yourself without a witness in every living thing. Help them, Lord, to walk with reverence and sensitivity through all the days of their lives.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 20, 2015.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PAUL thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday's House passage of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act represents a vital ray of hope for the countless victims of modern slavery who need our help. Victims groups and advocates tell us that this human rights legislation would provide unprecedented support to domestic victims of trafficking. They urged Congress to pass it.

We can now say that we have passed it. We can now say that hope is on the way for the victims who suffer in the shadows. Unfortunately, the victims of modern-day slavery had to wait entirely too long for help.

Last Congress, the House of Representatives did its job by passing several pieces of legislation, but the Senate failed to bring any trafficking legislation to the floor.

As a new majority, Senate Republicans were determined to make this matter a priority. Senator GRASSLEY promptly reported legislation out of the Judiciary Committee, and we quickly put it on the Senate floor.

As we all know by now, there was an unforeseen—to put it mildly—impediment to getting this bill done. But we were determined to see this legislation through to successful completion. Success was possible because the new ma-

jority kept its focus on facts, substance, and good policy for the people who remained our focus throughout the debate, and that is the victims of modern slavery.

I could not be more grateful to Senator CORNYN for his outstanding work on this issue. I thank the House for passing such an important human rights bill yesterday. Now I urge the President to sign this legislation from the new Congress as quickly as possible. The victims of such terrible abuse have had to wait entirely too long for Washington's help. Let's not make them wait a moment longer.

TRADE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday Senator WARNER, a Democrat, and Senator ERNST, a Republican, joined me in hosting a press conference with small business owners on the benefits of trade for entrepreneurs. I want to thank them both for coming. I thank Senator WARNER, in particular, for helping to lead his party on this issue.

We were joined by small business owners with some pretty incredible stories. These Americans highlighted opportunities that knocking down unfair overseas barriers to American products can provide to us here at home.

My favorite, obviously, was Chase Robbins, a constituent of mine from Shelbyville. After Chase was medically discharged from the Army, he was able to scrape together \$1,600 with a buddy and start the kind of business he had already dreamed of as early as 2010. It is a business that specializes in just the kind of thing you would expect a young guy such as Chase to be into—high-performance auto parts. And, thanks to trade, it is now both a business that exports a percentage of its products and one that also employs fellow Kentuckians.

His is a small business with just three employees for now—just three for

- This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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now—but it is a small business that is allowing him to live his dreams and to help others live theirs, too. It is a story countless other Americans know all too well and one we should do everything to encourage. Yet, while Chase has achieved success thanks to trade, he knows there is still a lot more we should be doing if the aim is to help businesses grow, help his employees earn more, and help other Kentuckians live their dreams too.

Here is what Chase said yesterday:

As our business has grown internationally, we have been confronted with barriers that compromise global markets. It was not long after sending our first shipment overseas that we realized trade rules were outdated for our business. Most of the agreements and rules were written before small businesses like ours were able to fully utilize the internet to exploit the global market. Trade agreements offer the best chance to lower barriers and increase market access for small companies like mine. We see a bright future for . . . companies like ours in the export market but we need new trade deals to get there.

And this, Mr. President, is a business with three employees that is exporting products.

So here was Chase's solution: "Trade Promotion Authority is the first step towards modernizing trade agreements," he said, "and I encourage Congress to pass TPA as soon as possible."

Entrepreneurs such as Chase know that the United States does not have many trade barriers, but other countries do. They know that many of these barriers are extremely unfair to American workers and American products. They know that passing trade promotion authority is the way to address such an unfair situation.

Our friends on the far left may try to cynically spin their war against the future of something other than what it truly is, but we all know better. It is no wonder President Obama has called them "wrong" and suggested that they make stuff up. What happens if the far left actually succeeds in its apparent quest to retain foreign tariffs that unfairly impact American workers and their paychecks? How is that good for us?

It would mean lost opportunities for American risk takers such as Chase and the employees who entrepreneurs such as him care about. It would mean lost opportunities for American manufacturers, lost opportunities for Kentucky farmers, and lost opportunities for more jobs, better wages, and a growing economy that can lift everyone up.

Jobs and a better economy are the kinds of things I am going to continue to fight for. I think the legislation before us represents a great opportunity to do so. President Obama agrees, as well. So I am going to keep working to get votes on amendments—both Republican and Democrat amendments.

There have been objections from the other side of the aisle. I would remind our colleagues that even with my strong support, the Senate cannot have

a robust amendment process if every single amendment offered by Democrats or Republicans is objected to by our friends on the other side.

Our bill managers, Senator HATCH and Senator WYDEN, are working hard. We hope to get past these objections so that more amendments can be considered. But we will need cooperation. The Senate cannot vote on amendments that are being prevented.

We hope to see more of that cooperation so we can pass good, fair, and enforceable trade legislation that will benefit our country and so many of the people we represent.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ISSUES FACING THE MIDDLE CLASS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, at the end of this month, Republicans will have been in charge of the Senate for almost half a year. After all of this time, what have they done to address issues facing the middle class? Zero.

Let's take a quick look at what the Republican leadership has achieved this year. The Keystone Pipeline legislation took a month, a bill that was nothing more than a favor for billionaires and special interests. It would allow foreign oil to be imported into the United States to be shipped to foreign countries. It has spent almost another month on the shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security—the shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security—during a time when ISIS is raging and all the other problems around the world, and they—the Republicans—want to shut down the Federal Government as it relates to Homeland Security.

We spent 3 weeks on a senseless delay over funding for victims of human trafficking, over an abortion issue that had nothing to do with human trafficking. I would respond to my friend, the majority leader, we would have passed this last Congress, except that they objected to it—short memory, I think.

Now, here we are spending the last week considering trade legislation that has done nothing—nothing, not a single thing—to help working middle-class Americans. In fact, it causes huge job losses. As Einstein said, if you keep doing the same thing over and over again and you expect a different result, that is the definition of insanity.

We can look at these trade bills over the years. Every one of them, without exception, causes job losses to American workers, millions of job losses. Yet they are going to try the same thing again and hope for a different result. That is insanity.

If the Senate is not actively advocating for the well-being of middle-class Americans, we are wasting our

time. When the Republicans took over the Senate, the majority leader promised to make the needs of Americans a priority. Here is what he said last November: "Under a new majority, our focus would be on passing legislation that improves the economy, that makes it easier for Americans to find jobs, and that helps restore Americans' confidence in their country and their government."

Why then have we not moved toward legislation that makes it easier for Americans to find jobs or reforms that help us restore Americans' confidence in their government?

A few months after November—actually the beginning of this year—the majority leader reiterated a call for commonsense legislation that puts the middle class first. He said: "Let's pass legislation that focuses on jobs and the real concerns of the middle class."

But, again, what have the Senate Republicans done? They have stopped any effort made to help the middle class, whether it is minimum wage, equal pay for men and women, student debt, and on and on with things that would help the middle class. They have been ignored. We should be focusing on making it easier for Americans to find jobs, addressing the needs of the middle class and restoring Americans' faith in our government.

It is not enough for the majority leader to mouth these words that he supports jobs. His agenda must reflect it, as well. But it does not. It does not do anything to help job creation. If we want to create jobs, why don't we do something with infrastructure, the surface transportation bill?

To his credit, the Presiding Officer has an idea regarding how that should be paid for. I have worked with him and, whether his idea and my idea are perfect, at least it is an effort to figure out some way to do something about jobs. Jobs—we have to do something about surface transportation. Some 50 percent of America's roads are in disrepair, and 64,000 bridges are structurally deficient. Our railroad systems are outdated, and we know that recently from the headlines we have seen with that devastating accident in Pennsylvania. Instead of working with Democrats to provide adequate, long-term investment into our country's surface transportation, Republicans are advocating for short-term fix after short-term fix.

Repairing our Nation's roads and bridges through long-term investments could provide thousands of jobs for Americans. If the Republican leader truly has the interests of the middle class at heart, he should be leading the charge for these investments, but he is leading the charge against them.

Today, the Senate will resume consideration of the trade legislation. Because of Senate Democrats, that trade legislation includes vital programs that help America's workers retrain and find new employment if they lose their jobs because of foreign trade. And