Even though these trade agreements differ widely in scope and in content, they have one feature in common. Their aim is opening markets for American exports. Who is in the best position to monitor whether or not they achieve that purpose? I submit, Mr. President, that the companies who are supposed to benefit from the agreements are in the best position, along with their trade associations.

We have about 1,000 people from the private sector in the advisory committee system. They are all volunteers, working free of charge. They do an excellent job on their first task, advising the government on the negotiating end of trade policy. We should get them working on their second task, monitoring existing trade agreements. And they should do their monitoring out in the open.

Every new trade agreement should be assigned to at least one advisory committee. That committee should be responsible for monitoring compliance with the agreement. That committee should report regularly on implementation. It should recommend specific action when it finds examples of noncompliance. Complicated agreements, such as NAFTA and the Uruguay Round, should be parceled out among several committees.

Prospective members of trade advisory committees should all meet the following test: do they represent an organization willing and able to help monitor compliance with trade agreements? Only those who answer yes should be put on a committee.

Mr. President, let me turn now to the second issue we should examine: public participation.

I come from a state with a strong tradition of open government. A Montanan has the right to attend any meeting that a State official holds. No exceptions. The federal government has a tradition of openness too, especially with respect to advisory committees. Congress made openness a statutory requirement with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) of 1972. When we passed the Trade Act, we specified openness by requiring that all of these trade advisory committees follow FACA procedures.

We left one exception. Meetings could be closed to the public if they covered matters which would seriously compromise U.S. Government trade negotiations. That's a quote from the law. ''Seriously compromise.'' And only with respect to ongoing active negotiations.

Today there aren't many active trade negotiations underway. So there is not much to be seriously compromised. Nevertheless, too many advisory committees are still closed to interested observers. That's unacceptable. It's illogical. It's illegal.

What are the advisory committees talking about in these meetings? I've heard from people who attend them that almost all of the information discussed is pretty straightforward. Nothing very secret.

People who are barred from the meetings don't know that. They begin to suspect that something's going on in those rooms. Maybe somebody is trying to hide something from them. Closing off these meetings just feeds that feeling of mistrust. It's bad government.

In the past, the Administration used to close all ISAC and IFAC meetings, until they lost a 1996 court challenge. It was a blanket closure policy. In arguing this case before the court, the Trade Representative's office said that Congress agreed with the blanket closure policy, because we never did anything about it.

Let's do something about it. The Constitution gives Congress, not the Executive Branch, authority over international trade. I intend to introduce legislation designed to clear up any confusion about what Congress expects with regard to public participation in ISAC's and IFAC's.

Finally, Mr. President, I have found one other feature of advisory committee that we should change. There is a ''consensus'' mentality. Some committees feel that they can only give advice if they reach a consensus. They say that this is why committees can't have members who come at issues in different ways. They'll never get consensus. I see nothing wrong with committees sending forward recommendations along with minority viewpoints. We're a democracy. We do this all the time.

I look forward to working with my Senate colleagues and with the trade agencies of the Executive Branch to get the advisory committee system back on track.

Mr. President, I have written to Secretary Daley and Ambassador Barshefsky outlining my thoughts on this issue. I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD.

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

UNITED STATES SENATE,
Washington, DC, April 4, 2000.

Hon. WILLIAM M. DALEY,
Secretary of Commerce, Washington, DC.
Hon. CHARLENE BARSHEFSKY,
U.S. Trade Representative, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY DALEY AND AMBASSADOR BARSHEFSKY: Your recent initiative to take a close look at the trade advisory process is right on target. As you know, I am concerned by the resignations by prominent labor leaders and environmentalists from TEPAC and ACTPN, and by the Administration's appeal of the court ruling on NGO participation in ISAC's. It is time to re-examine the process, balancing sometimes conflicting goals.

For example, we seek influential leaders on ACTPN and TEPAC who understand trade policy. It is not always easy to find both qualities in one person. As a result, the ability of ACTPN and TEPAC members to contribute to trade policy formulation varies widely.

The desire for the ISAC's and IFAC's to foster consensus recommendations leads to excluding certain interested parties. I have heard from business groups and NGO's on this point. Morever, because the advisory process can be rigid and slow, it is tempting to circumvent the ISAC's or IFAC's, and instead use informal groups of trade advisors.

Let me offer a few ideas for improving the process.

We should give the advisory committees a more active role in monitoring implementation of existing agreements. Their charters include this function, but we don't emphasize compliance monitoring. We should strengthen this function. The private sector can help fill the information gaps which the GAO identified in its recent report on trade agreement compliance.

In addition, we should reexamine committee operating rules, such as procedures for choosing members and the role of the designated federal official. This may entail streamlining the system by reducing the number of standing committees. Finally, we have to clarify the relationship between the 1974 Trade Act and the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

This 26 year-old system is ready for some fresh eyes and for a legislative remedy. I look forward to working with you to improve the process.

Sincerely,

MAX BAUCUS.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Tuesday, April 4, 2000, the Federal debt stood at $5,758,854,640,223.41 (Five trillion, seven hundred fifty-eight billion, eight hundred fifty-four million, six hundred forty thousand, two hundred twenty-three dollars and forty-one cents).

Five years ago, April 4, 1995, the Federal debt stood at $4,876,207,000,000 (Four trillion, eight hundred seventy-six billion, two hundred seven million).

Ten years ago, April 4, 1990, the Federal debt stood at $3,092,193,000,000 (Three trillion, ninety-two billion, one hundred ninety-three million).

Fifteen years ago, April 4, 1985, the Federal debt stood at $1,738,045,000,000 (One trillion, seven hundred thirty-eight billion, forty-five million).

Twenty-five years ago, April 4, 1975, the Federal debt stood at $505,481,000,000 (Five hundred five billion, four hundred eighty-one million) which reflects a debt increase of more than $5 trillion—$5,253,373,640,223.41 (Five trillion, two hundred fifty-three billion, three hundred seventy-three million, six hundred forty thousand, two hundred twenty-three dollars and forty-one cents) during the past 25 years.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO GIL HODGES

• Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Gil Hodges on his 25 year career in Major League Baseball. Gil Hodges served 18 years as a major league player and 7 years as a manager, during which he distinguished himself through exceptional performance, success, professionalism and personal achievement.

At the conclusion of his playing career in 1962, Gil Hodges was the leading