in or are otherwise eligible for unemployment compensation and are unable to collect it.

Effectively, as shown, this is the inadequacy in terms of childcare. Only 14 percent of eligible children have access to Government-assisted childcare.

These charts give you some idea why the working families of America have such apprehension in terms of the future and in terms of their own lives. We need the programs to be able to deal with this situation. We have a number of recommendations, and I will mention them very quickly this afternoon and will put in additional kinds of information.

First, we need to safeguard working families from the turbulence of the modern economy by providing stronger and better support for families in crisis. Our country is going through profound economic shifts, and too many workers are losing their jobs in the wake of these changes.

I have introduced bipartisan legislation, the Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act, to make sure those who have worked hard and paid into the system get the benefits they deserve. I hope we will see progress on the bill soon so that much more that needs to be done will be done to help Americans who are struggling to find a job.

We also need an aggressive agenda to help families facing a health care crisis. We must make more progress toward a universal, comprehensive program that is going to be there and be available and accessible to all Americans.

In the meantime, we can follow the examples of my own State, Massachusetts, which has taken the lead in providing our residents access to quality health care. It is absolutely essential, as these charts pointed out, that we address this problem.

Strengthening the safety net alone is not enough. We need to redouble our efforts to restore economic opportunity for families. Americans are working harder than ever, and they need the additional kinds of training. In my State now we have 145,000 unemployed. We have 75,000 job openings. They are good jobs. Yet, we have seen a continuing reduction in terms of training programs. Those people could get the jobs and be taxpayers and be committed and productive members of society. But we have seen over the period of the recent years, including with this last budget request, a continued reduction in terms of training programs by this administration.

We know workers have to have a continuing, ongoing upgrading of their skills in order to be able to deal with these jobs. I think we need labor law reforms, such as the Employee Free Choice Act, to protect the right to organize so employees can stand up and fight for what is fair.

I think we need to address again the earned income tax credit to help those at the bottom of the economic ladder who have worked hard and played by the rules. We have to continue, I think, the progress we have made in the increase in the minimum wage so we do not fall back in terms of providing working families with a decent income.

The late Barbara Jordan once said:

> What the [American] people want is very simple. They want an America as good as its promise.

The promise of America is that it is truly a land of opportunity, where every working family can share in the Nation's prosperity, where we all rise together, and we can be confident that our children have a bright future. For decades we enjoyed that vision of shared prosperity. I am confident we can make that promise a reality for American families again. We owe it to all the workers who have seen their bills go up, while their paychecks go down. We owe it to all the parents who cannot sleep at night because they are worried about their children's future. We owe it to all the families who are struggling and need a reason to celebrate this holiday season. We owe the American people our best efforts, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the weeks and months ahead to put working families back on track.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 3688

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks in morning business for about 15 minutes, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 480, H.R. 3688, the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement; that the statutory time be reduced to 10 hours, equally divided as provided for under the statute; that when the Senate resumes the measure on Tuesday, December 4, there be 90 minutes remaining for debate equally divided; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the measure be set aside until 2:15 p.m. and, without further intervening action or debate, the Senate proceed to vote on passage of H.R. 3688 at 2:15 p.m. on Tuesday.

This unanimous consent agreement has been cleared by both sides.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to speak in connection with the 2007 farm bill which was being debated on the floor of the Senate over the last several weeks prior to the time of Thanksgiving. As I rise to speak about the farm bill, I wish to say thank you to my colleague and good friend from Massachusetts, Senator KENNEDY, for again bringing to the attention of the American public the importance of what is happening economically across the spectrum of America today, which is that there is a great sense of concern and instability and nervousness among the American public about what is happening in their own economic lives and whether their children will have access to higher education, whether they will be able to afford health care and health care insurance, whether gas prices are going to essentially force them to not be able to afford the essentials of life.

I think within all of that, one of the things Senator KENNEDY so eloquently speaks to is this covenant of America, that somehow we are all here as Americans in a common mission to try to create a better world for our children and for our grandchildren and for the rest of humanity. The one thing we cannot afford to do is to allow that covenant to be broken. We in this Chamber of the U.S. Senate, working in a bipartisan way, have an obligation to ensure that the covenant of America is something we honor, something we give dignity to in our efforts through our work.

As part of that work, one of the things I think is very critical is that we not forget those parts of America which, in many ways, have been the forgotten America, and those are the communities of rural America. Those are communities like the towns and the counties where I come from and the county of Conejos County, which is one of the poorest counties in the United States of America, which, no matter how well the rest of America is doing, seems to be struggling on the vine.

So it is important for us in the Senate, in the weeks and days ahead, to do everything we can to make sure we pass the farm bill because it is a farm bill that is good for America. It is a farm bill that is good for nutrition. As my good friend KENT CONRAD and my good friend Senator HARKIN have kept reminding the people of America, 67 percent of the bill we are working on is for nutrition. That aspect of our legislation is invented to provide assistance to those who are most in need. So I am hopeful that as we move forward this week and next week, we as the Senate will come together on a bipartisan basis to move forward with a farm bill that is so essential to the food security of the Nation.

I wish to thank Chairman HARKIN and Senator CHAMBLISS for their hard work on this farm bill we have put so much time on for the last 2½ years. I also thank Chairman BAUCUS and Ranking Member GRASSLEY for their work on the Finance Committee because their contribution to this farm bill has been so essential to get us to a point where we have a forward-thinking and balanced bill on the floor. I know that as I speak this afternoon, there are negotiations underway with respect to whether we can narrow the number of amendments to be considered on the floor so that we can move forward to consideration and hopefully final passage of this bill.

A lot of folks in this country are looking to us in the Senate this week

and next to see whether we have the courage to pass a farm bill. In my view, we must pass this farm bill. It is a bill that helps the 50 million Americans living in rural communities. It is a bill that helps kids who deserve fresh fruits and vegetables with their lunches. It is a bill that helps put healthy and safe food on the tables of the people of this country. It helps us reduce our dependence on foreign oil and build a clean energy economy for the 21st century, and in my view that clean energy economy will be the signature domestic and foreign policy issue of our future here in America.

A few days ago, I was in the San Luis Valley with my family at our ranch. Our land, which we have ranched on for five generations, is just a few miles north of the New Mexico-Colorado border in a county that reflects many of the challenges that are facing rural America. Almost a quarter of the residents in my home county of Conejos—that is one in four—live below the poverty line, with a median household income of around $27,000 a year. In the neighboring county, Costilla County, household income is about half the median in the United States.

It is an inescapable fact of America that rural communities across the country are struggling. Median income in rural counties nationwide is $11,000 lower than the national median. If you live in a rural community, that means you are going to be making a lot less money than if you live in a nonrural community. Jobs and population are disappearing in these counties.

I wish to point out this map. It is a map of what has happened just in the last 5 years here in the United States of America. The counties that are in red on this map are counties that have lost population. These are part of the rural America we are trying to address in this bill by opening a whole new chapter of opportunity that will give the farmers and ranchers and residents of these rural counties and States and communities for the good way of life, the way the rest of America has that good way of life. All of the counties on this map that are either red or yellow are counties that are losing population and are falling behind the national average. Many of those counties are counties such as the ones in my State. There you will find schools with declining enrollments, you will find hospitals and health clinics across those counties that are closing, and you will find stores on Main Streets that are getting boarded up.

Here is a picture of downtown Brush, CO. Mr. President, you know these towns and communities in Virginia the way I do in my State of Colorado. I can go across the eastern plains or the southern part of my State, and in town after town out in the rural areas of my State, these Main Streets of America are being boarded up and are for sale because of the declining economic vitality in those communities. These are places where the tractor dealerships, the hardware stores, and the feed stores are closing down. You know from all of the signs you see out there that farmers and ranchers are struggling.

This has certainly been the case in Colorado. We have had a severe drought in my State now for the last 8 years, and we are now just pulling out of that drought. In 2002, we lost 30 percent of our wheat on account of the drought. The acres that were harvested had an average yield of 23 bushels per acre—not enough to cover the operating and overhead costs of producing those 23 bushels per acre. In 2004, it happened again, and we lost 600,000 acres of wheat production in my State of Colorado. In 2006, again, our wheat losses amounted to around $95 million. But it is not just wheat and corn; it is also what has happened with respect to disasters in my State. This is a picture taken in Washington County, named after George Washington, right outside of Akron, CO, where you see the results of drought which essentially have annihilated this field from any kind of yield or production on the eastern plains.

Over the last few weeks, I have heard people, both in this Chamber and especially in the media, paint a rosy picture of our rural economies. They say corn and soy and wheat prices are up, and they argue, therefore, that farmers are doing well and perhaps a farm bill is not needed. They use this as a ground for attacking and blocking the bill that is before us—this bill, which is a bipartisan product. But it is no secret that the commodity prices in the business section aren't a very good indication of how farmers and ranchers are actually doing. If corn prices are up, that doesn't necessarily mean farms and ranches in Baca County or Yuma County, CO, are doing much better. I can tell you that the cattle business, for one—the cattle business, which I know well—gets a whole lot more difficult when feed prices are high.

Where has Washington been while our farmers and ranchers have been fighting to stay afloat? For years, in my view, Washington has turned a blind eye to the problems in rural America, perhaps because we in rural America don't have the clout people in urban America have because of their votes. It is a neglect that is surfacing yet again among those who hold this legislation from going forward.

This neglect is disheartening when you know just how much possibility and promise there is in the rural communities of America. With modest investments, rural America can be the engine of our clean energy economy, fueling an alternative energy revolution that capitalizes on the hard work, the productivity, and the entrepreneurship of our farmers and ranchers across our great land. It can continue to provide us safe and healthy food, and it can continue to protect millions of acres of land and waterways that we value.

Here is a picture of one of the educational programs in my State called EQIP which is addressed in this farm bill. This picture shows the farm bill at work, helping to protect our land and our water while keeping our farmers the most productive in the world. These are some of our farmers from the Saint Vrain and Boulder Creek watersheds learning some new practices that reduce tillage and increase the yields from our farms.

The field day which is shown in this picture was part of a 3-year EQIP conservation innovation grant that was done in partnership with the local conservation district, with the local farmers, seed companies, and farm equipment dealers. At the end of the day, these farmers went home with a few ways to boost their bottom line while protecting the land and water of Colorado and America.

The farm bill has an enormous impact on this Nation's land and water. We think about America the beautiful, this great land. Well, non-Federal agricultural and forest lands occupy about 70 percent of the lands in the lower 48 States. So 70 percent of the lands in the 48 States is what is at the heart of this farm bill. Seven out of ten acres in the contiguous United States are affected by the farm bill. These lands provide the habitat and corridors that support healthy wildlife populations, filter groundwater supplies, regulate surface water flows, sequester carbon, and provide the open space and vistas we all love. As I learned growing up on our ranch in southern Colorado, farmers and ranchers are some of the best stewards of these resources. They want to take care of their land because they know that taking care of their land and water is essential for their livelihood.

Our farmers also want to be very much a part of a clean energy future for America. This is a picture of an ethanol plant, which is new, in Sterling, CO. This ethanol plant produces about 42 million gallons of fuel a year. This is only one of three plants in our State that have come on line just in the last 2 years and partly as a result of the work that was done in this Chamber in the 2005 Energy Policy Act. It is part of the renewable energy revolution that is taking place across America. Title 9 of the farm bill addresses this renewable energy future for our country. A fourth ethanol plant just like this one has come on line in Colorado just in the last week.

But it goes beyond biofuels, which is a central part of this section of the farm bill. It goes to other kinds of renewable energy.

It goes to programs such as wind. Here is a wind farm in Prowers County in the eastern plains of Colorado, out in that part of the ''forgotten America.'' It is that part that is so red in my State because we know that is part of the area that was part of the great Dust Bowl, which, even at this point in time, in 2007, is a place that is so

sparsely populated but has so much potential for our future. This wind farm in Prowers County is part of an effort in our State whereby, at the end of 2008, we project we will be producing over 1,000 megawatts of power from wind in Colorado. That is the equivalent of the amount of electricity produced by three coal-fired powerplants, and we have been able to do that in a period of 2 years.

We planted the seeds for these kinds of projects in the 2005 Energy Policy Act and in the Energy bills we passed earlier this year, which I hope we get to refurbish and pass again in the next several days. But the farm bill is also part of that.

The 2007 farm bill takes the next step by helping farmers and ranchers deploy the renewable energy technologies that have been developed in lots of places around our country, including the National Renewable Energy Lab in Golden, CO.

With the $1.3 billion that this bill devotes to energy programs, farmers will be able to apply for grants to develop biorefineries and to improve the handling, harvest, transport, and storage of feedstocks for biofuels. The bill includes tax credits for small wind turbines and cellulosic biofuel production. And it stimulates research into the methods and technologies that will allow the most productive lands in the world to provide more and more of our energy. The farm bill, in title IX, shows us how rural America will help us grow our way to energy independence.

Reducing our dependence upon foreign oil will be the central national security, environmental security, and economic security challenge for all of us in the coming decades. It is also a tremendous opportunity.

The country that successfully replaces its imports of foreign oil with clean home-grown energy will reap competitive and technological advantages that will keep it out front in the world for decades to come.

Mr. President, it is time to put the interests of rural America before the politics of obstructionism. I urge my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, to find a way forward in which we can narrow the number of amendments that have been filed on this legislation, so that under the leadership of Senator HARKIN and Senator CHAMBLISS we can have an opportunity to vote on a final farm bill as part of the Christmas present that we should be delivering to the American people. It is my hope that, as we move forward on the farm bill, we move forward with equal fervor in having the Energy bill concluded, which is now on its way to passage in the House of Representatives.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, morning business is closed.

UNITED STATES-PERU TRADE PROMOTION AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 3688, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3688) to implement the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, is the business of the Senate at this point the Peruvian Free Trade Agreement?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Yes.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I am going to speak about that subject, and I will confess, as I start, that the old admonition never argue with someone who buys ink by the barrel is something I should have learned long ago. I take issue with a company that buys ink by the tanker truck: the Washington Post.

Speaking of trade, the Washington Post described, I think, why there is not so much of a thoughtful debate about trade as there is a thoughtless debate about it. In this editorial, they say this about trade in an attempt to criticize some of those who are running for President and are distancing themselves from the brand of free trade. What the Washington Post says is that a candidate said the following quote:

NAFTA was a mistake to the extent that it did not deliver what we had hoped it would, and that is why I call for a trade time out.

One candidate said NAFTA was a mistake, and they quoted the candidate saying it. The Washington Post says:

Such demagoguery.

So it is now demagoguery for a candidate for President to allege that a trade agreement was a mistake. That is demagoguery? I don't quite understand the Washington Post. The Washington Post says that NAFTA didn't cause the current U.S. trade deficit with Mexico. Really? That is an interesting conclusion, with no facts to support it. There are no facts to support that conclusion.

I think I will show a chart that shows what has happened to our trade with Mexico since the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, was signed. The evidence is pretty substantial about what happened with our trade between the United States and Mexico: Just prior to negotiating a free trade agreement with Mexico, we had a very small surplus with the country of Mexico of $1.5 billion. Now, last year, it went from a very small surplus to a $65 billion deficit. The Washington Post says—about a candidate that said NAFTA was a mistake—that is demagoguery. Give us a break. It is not demagoguery to suggest that something doesn't work when we have gone from a $1.5 billion trade surplus to a $65 billion deficit.

The Washington Post also says that the agreements contributed marginally to the shifting of workers from some less competitive sectors to others. That is arcane language to describe what happened. After NAFTA, the three largest imports from Mexico to the United States are automobiles, automobile parts, and electronics. The contention was made by those who supported NAFTA that this would only mean the migration of low-skill, low-income work to Mexico. It didn't happen quite that way. Automobiles, automobile parts, and electronics represent the products of high-skill labor in this country, and those jobs have been lost.

I only wished to point out that the Washington Post described for us today why this debate about trade has largely been thoughtless. Yes, it is a global economy, I understand that. There are many faces to the global economy—some very attractive and some not so attractive. I will try to describe them both today. The global economy has galloped forward at a very aggressive pace, but the rules have not kept pace. So the result is we have some very significant problems and dislocations. We are drowning in trade debt in this country, and I will describe that.

What is before us is another free trade agreement, the free trade agreement with Peru. Let me say that I can count votes. I understand what will happen in this Chamber. The Senate will support and vote for the free trade agreement with Peru.

I maintain again today that I am not going to vote for additional free trade agreements until benchmarks are attached and there is accountability for those benchmarks. Had we had benchmarks in the NAFTA, we would not have gone from a $1.5 billion surplus to a $65 billion deficit. We would have, at some point, said, wait a second, something is happening that is not right for our country.

First of all, I don't think we should be signing new trade agreements until we fix some of the fundamental problems in the old agreements. Two, I believe that the Peru agreement represents an expansion of a failed model. It has failed before and will fail again. And, No. 3, I don't think it contains—I know it doesn't contain any benchmarks or accountability or a mechanism for withdrawal should the trade agreement fail at least relative to what we expect the trade agreement to accomplish.