

May 25 at 9:30 a.m. to conduct an oversight hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet to conduct a hearing on Thursday, May 25, 2000, at 10:00 a.m., in SD226.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet to conduct a hearing on Thursday, May 25, 2000, at 2:00 p.m., in SD226.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND RECREATION

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on National Parks, Historic Preservation and Recreation be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, May 25 at 2:30 p.m. to conduct an oversight hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Financial Institutions be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, May 25, 2000, to conduct a hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, PROLIFERATION, AND FEDERAL SERVICE.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation, and Federal Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, May 25, 2000, at 10:00 a.m. for a hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Public Health, be authorized to meet for a hearing during the session of the Senate on Thursday, May 25, 2000, at 9:30 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Major Scott Kindsvater from Dodge City, KS, a major in the United States Air Force, an F-15 pilot, and a congressional fellow, be granted the privilege of the floor during the foreign policy dialog.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent my legislative fellow, Chris Grant, be given access to the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Tom Lederer, a congressional fellow serving in Senator CONRAD's office, be granted floor privileges during the consideration of the crop insurance conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, on behalf of our majority leader, Senator LOTT, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. DEWINE. Seeing my colleague from Georgia on the floor, if he would like to proceed. I am going to be about 10 minutes.

Mr. COVERDELL. The Senator was recognized. It is appropriate he has his 10 minutes.

FREE TRADE IN THE AMERICAS

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, as you know, our colleagues in the House passed, by a vote of 237-197, legislation to establish permanent normalized trade relations with China. The vote yesterday condensed months of intense debate over economics, foreign policy, and national security concerns with regard to that relationship with China.

This is significant legislation, and I look forward to a thorough Senate debate on this matter. I will have more to say about this very important issue during that debate. There are very significant economic and trade concerns, but there are also some very significant national security issues that must be discussed.

Over the last several months, the current administration has invested considerable time, energy, and resources to achieving House approval of what is essentially a bilateral agreement with China. While this issue is a very important one, I also believe we need to place it in its proper context and consider whether our overall trade policies have been successful.

I am concerned that over the last 4 years, the administration's pursuit of a bilateral trade agreement with China has come at the expense of missed bilateral and even multilateral trade agreements and economic opportunities right here within our own hemisphere.

Regardless of what the potential economic benefits that PNTR with China could offer, the bottom line is that stability and economic opportunity within our own hemisphere always must be a top priority. To that extent, we, as a nation, stand to lose or gain, depending on the economic health and security of our own neighbors. What that means is

that ultimately a strong and free and prosperous hemisphere means a strong and free and prosperous United States.

The reality is that in 1997, we had an opportunity to move forward to give the President greater authority to negotiate new trade agreements with countries in our own hemisphere. Sadly, that did not happen. Now it will be up to our next President to pursue new markets in this hemisphere. If we as a country do not lead, other nations and their businesses will take our place. No country is waiting for us to act first.

In the end, the longer we wait to pursue more trade opportunities in our own hemisphere, the more we stand to lose.

Take, for example, my home State of Ohio. The future of Ohio's economy is linked to our ability to send our products abroad. Given the chance, Ohio's businessmen and women and Ohio's farmers can and do compete effectively on the world stage. For example, in most years, one-third to one-half of Ohio's major cash crops—corn, wheat, and soybeans—are found in markets and meals outside our country. In 1998, the city of Cincinnati increased its exports by slightly more than \$1 billion. It was the fourth-biggest such increase in the country. Columbus, OH, boosted its exports by \$92.5 million, ranking 36th in the country and second in the State in terms of percentage growth. Open trade opportunities have allowed Ohio's and the Nation's economy to continue thriving.

This argument has been used to support granting permanent normal trade relations with China. Much of the public debate has focused on the potential of more than 1 billion Chinese consumers. Yet, we are ignoring another very sizable market—the market within our own hemisphere. Right here in our hemisphere, with a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of more than \$10 trillion—a hemisphere encompassing 800 million people—trade with our hemispheric neighbors represents vast opportunities. These are opportunities that we must not ignore.

Right now, Europe, Asia, and Canada are securing their economic fortunes throughout Latin America and Central America. Take the example of Brazil—the world's eighth largest economy. In 1997, the European Union—the EU—exported to Brazil more than they did to any other country, and between 1990 and 1998, their exports grew 255 percent. Also, although United States exports to Argentina are double that of Asia's, our growth rate is less than half of Asia's incredible 1664 percent increase from 1990 to 1998.

As my colleagues can see, other nations are riding the tides of change—of free-market economics and openness—and integrating into the world economy. The region's "Mercosur" or common market—which includes Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and associate member Chile—is the world's