

So with 14 million Americans still unemployed, our country will tune in to the State of the Union tonight with keen ears for ideas that create jobs, that boost the economy. But our three negotiated trade deals continue to sit there. It is unacceptable, and it needs to change. By this July, the European Union and South Korea will have implemented their own free-trade agreement, putting U.S. business at a competitive disadvantage.

The Korea-U.S. Free trade Agreement fixes that. Our friends to the north in Canada and south in Mexico have trade deals in place with Colombia. While our agreement languishes, their exports are winning the marketplace. Imagine how our exporters feel watching their competition move to the front of the line, knowing that the agreements put them ahead.

If we fail to act on the agreement, it is clear that our U.S. producers will fall behind. It is happening. Thus, today, some of my colleagues and I introduced a resolution pushing for the approval of the Korea, Colombia, and Panama trade agreements. Our President and this Congress hold the keys to unlocking the benefits.

According to the U.S. International Trade Commission, these agreements would increase new U.S. exports between \$10 and \$12 billion, reducing the U.S. trade deficit and boosting the economy. In addition, these new U.S. goods exported to South Korea, to Colombia, to Panama would yield 27,000 new jobs. Overall this means an estimated gain in GDP of over \$12 billion from net exports annually.

This would be music to the ears of our exporters and those looking for work. Their government should similarly be chomping at the bit to get this done. It is within our grasp. American workers and businesses are essentially pleading for us to move forward. The folks on the production line, in our fields, those seeking employment, are the ones with true skin in the game.

We need to unleash their potential by unleashing the pending agreements with South Korea, Colombia, and Panama. These agreements will level the playing field and eliminate barriers for U.S. goods. Our workers are always ready to roll up their sleeves and do what they can to start producing.

Recently our Federal Reserve Chairman, Ben Bernanke, said: Our current pace of hiring will require 4 to 5 years to reach normal unemployment levels. Now, 4 to 5 years is too long to wait. We need to do everything we can to change that picture. So imagine the impact of immediately eliminating tariffs on 80 percent of U.S. exports to South Korea. Remember, only 13 percent of our goods and services are currently exported tariff free. How about immediately eliminating tariffs on U.S. exports to Colombia for more than 77 percent of agricultural goods and 76 percent of industrial goods. Consider a whopping 90 percent of Colombian imports already enter our country duty

free under the Andean Trade Preference Act. This leveling of the playing field is sorely needed.

To be clear, I do not oppose helping our neighbors, and the Andean agreement was designed to do that. But should we not at least seek the same treatment for our businesses and our workers?

Almost 1 year ago today we heard the President speak about aggressively expanding the marketplace in the international market. These agreements would do that. I hope tonight he reaffirms his commitment.

Finally, the third pillar of the competitive package that I introduced today will lower our corporate tax rates 20 percent. For many years, the United States has had the second highest corporate tax rate in the world—second highest corporate tax rate in the world—second only to Japan. Japan has now announced that they will reduce their corporate rate for 2011. With this reduction, the United States will have the highest corporate tax rate of anyone in the entire world. That means the U.S. tax environment for our job creators will be the least attractive in the entire world.

Here is the math: When you take into account a Federal corporate tax rate of 35 percent and the average State corporate tax rate, the combined U.S. corporate tax rate totals more than 39 percent, nearly 40. This combined rate soars above those of other countries with which American businesses compete. That makes absolutely no sense. Is it any wonder that jobs are leaving this country to go to other competitive countries? Our Nation should be encouraging business creation and growth, not putting our job creators at a disadvantage with this extraordinary, No. 1-in-the-world tax rate.

At least 27 of 34 nations in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development have cut their general corporate income tax rates since 2000. These countries have benefitted from increased capital investment, and—get this—they have seen their corporate tax revenues, as a share of GDP, actually increase even with the lower rate because they are expanding the base.

According to a July 2010 analysis by PricewaterhouseCoopers, the U.S. would have to reduce its Federal rate to 20.3 percent to match the average corporate rate of other OECD countries. Thankfully, many recognize the need to bring our corporate tax rate in line with those of other industrialized nations. In fact, in December, the President's Export Council recommended the corporate tax rate be reduced to 20 percent. This will stimulate job creation across the country, all sectors of the job market.

Washington cannot continue to say one thing and do another. That is why today I am introducing the Restoring America's Competitiveness in Enterprise Act of 2011. This legislative package, the 1099 repeal, the resolution supporting the trade agreements, the bill

to reduce the highest—soon to be the highest—corporate tax rate in the world will provide a solid foundation for our country to move forward.

It will send a powerful message that this 112th Senate supports job creation and is committed to unleashing America's competitiveness. I am hopeful that my colleagues will join me in supporting this important package. We are off to a good start, and I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have joined me in this effort.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:27 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. WEBB).

Mr. LEAHY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN.) Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. RES. 21

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I submit a resolution on behalf of myself and Senator TOM UDALL to amend rule XIX and rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, and I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, for purposes of having the resolution go over, under the rule, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard. The measure will go over, under the rule.

Mr. MERKLEY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam 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.