

met him and we had a wonderful visit. I enjoyed that day very much.

His own travels took him not only to Lake Tahoe in my State but through the entire State. California's Ronald Reagan was a close friend of Nevada's. In his earliest days as an actor, he entertained crowds at the Last Frontier on the Las Vegas strip. Decades later, the same week Ronald Reagan became Governor of California, Paul Laxalt became Governor next door in Nevada.

When Reagan first sought the Presidency, Laxalt managed his campaign, and when President Reagan worked down the street at the White House, Paul Laxalt worked here as Nevada's senior Senator. It was a special relationship, a unique relationship, one so close that some called Senator Laxalt the First Friend, and he was that.

I was fortunate enough to see firsthand President Reagan's appreciation for Nevada. After talking to Nevadans in Ely and across eastern Nevada, I came to the conclusion that I should drop some wilderness I was going to put in place and instead form a national park. Nevada did not have a national park, and we would call it the Great Basin National Park. After I introduced that legislation and it passed, President Reagan's Secretary of Agriculture recommended that he veto what would be Nevada's only national park. The Agriculture Secretary did not much like the idea of a young Member of Congress from the other political party putting such a bill on the President's desk.

I was worried about that. Word came to me that the President was going to veto this bill that was important to me. I asked for a meeting with his Superintendent of Parks, the National Parks Director. He had been the Superintendent of Parks for Ronald Reagan when Reagan was Governor of California. His name was Penn Mott. When he came to see me, he had been in the service of our country in many different ways. He was an elderly man when he came to see me. I explained to him what was happening and that I was told that President Reagan, upon recommendation of one of his Cabinet members, was going to veto my bill. That man looked at me and he said: President Reagan is not going to veto that bill. He said, when I was a young park ranger in 1928, Key Pittman, who was a famous Nevada Senator, very close to President Roosevelt, sent me to Nevada to find a place for a national park. He said: That is my park. I am the one who said it would go there. That is where it should go, and it never made it legislatively. But because of that meeting I had, and Ronald Reagan's understanding of what politics is all about, he did not veto my bill. He overruled his Secretary, and together, HARRY REID and Ronald Reagan created the Great Basin National Park.

It was not the last time President Reagan and I worked together to preserve our West. I introduced legislation that was important legislation. It in-

involved two Indian tribes, two endangered species, it involved Lake Tahoe, and it involved two rivers, the Truckee and Carson Rivers—I think I mentioned the two Indian tribes—a huge wetlands that had gone from a couple of hundred thousand acres to maybe less than a thousand very putrid acres. Birds died eating and drinking there. The wetlands basically had dried up.

It was a very important piece of legislation, but I got it passed. I got it passed here. Then it went to the House and got passed. Again, President Reagan's advisers recommended he veto that bill. Part of it was because of who pushed the legislation through. But President Reagan knew how important it was to Lake Tahoe, and one of his assistants, Sig Rogich, talked to him. Sig is a long-time Nevadan, worked very closely with President Reagan and with President Bush, and he talked to him about this important legislation. It was not vetoed. He signed this bill in spite of people recommending that this not be signed.

President Reagan's help in ending this water war meant a lot to me because he knew that when Americans are all in this together, even local issues, even statewide issues, are all of our concern. I remember how he signed my bill to establish this park because his view of that national park embodied his vision of the Nation.

He never looked at the legislation as a map of red States and blue States and purple States but as a landscape of States colored by green forests and brown deserts and clear waters.

My legislation, entitled the Negotiated Settlement, has changed that part of the country. Lake Tahoe is better off. The Indian tribes are better off. We preserved a lake, Lake Pyramid. It was landmark legislation. It could not have been done without his signature.

He knew when the Sun breached the horizon each day, the morning that dawned in America was a morning for all Americans and for families of all backgrounds. He said in that second inaugural address, "we have worked and acted together, not as members of political parties, but as Americans."

Ronald Reagan was a Republican President from the West, who cherished a famously close friendship with Tip O'Neill, a Democratic Speaker of the House from the East. Ronald Reagan was a patriot who created a friendship with Mikhail Gorbachev, the leader of a nation he called an Evil Empire. He would make certain America could defend herself but quietly sent a diplomatic team to start negotiating with the Soviet Union the minute he took office.

Ronald Reagan knew politics has always been and always will be about compromise, and that compromise can only happen when politicians share personal relationships. He knew public servants worked better as partners rather than partisans. And as much as he criticized government, he knew it was not a faceless machine. He appre-

ciated that government exists, as Lincoln said, of, for, and by the people.

That is why he was more beholden to simple pragmatism than stubborn principle. That is why he, a staunch conservative, raised taxes 11 times when the economy needed revenue. It is why he viewed the challenge of immigration through a practical lens. It is why he knew America could be strong and would be stronger still in a world without nuclear weapons.

He was not perfect. I did not agree with many of his politics or policies. But I always admired the way he captured our country's imagination. I always respected his honest assessment of his strengths and limitations alike. He was somebody who could look at himself and we would all smile a little bit.

One time he was running for Governor of California and someone asked him: Do you think you will be a good Governor? He said: I do not know. I have never acted the part.

That is who he was. He honestly assessed who he was, his strengths and limitations, and I admired the way he humbly surrounded himself with good, smart people.

A century after his birth Ronald Reagan's legacy remains as enduring as anyone who has ever unfurled the long ribbon of our Nation's history. That legacy lives not merely in his policies, and to honor it, it is not enough to try to apply his solutions of 30 years ago to the problems we confront today; rather, we should remember how he respected his colleagues and his constituents. We should try to emulate the confidence he communicated.

Ronald Reagan was a proud neighbor of Nevada, who united and motivated us by reminding us that all Americans live in the same neighborhood. That is a lesson I still remember today. That is a lesson I remember best about our 40th President, Ronald Reagan.

---

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

---

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY  
LEADER

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

COLOMBIA FREE TRADE  
AGREEMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, earlier today, the President spoke to the Chamber of Commerce in what some have described as an effort to make nice with the business community. I will leave others to analyze what the speech means politically. The first concern of the American people is what it will mean for the economy. As I have said before, what the President says matters a lot less than what he does.

So we will just have to wait and see whether the administration's actions support its rhetoric. And it is in that spirit that I would like to suggest one thing the President could do immediately, with Republican support, to show he is serious about jobs and the economy. He could work with us to pass free trade agreements with Colombia and Panama that have been languishing for years now.

We welcome the President's support for the South Korea Free Trade Agreement which has earned strong bipartisan support. But by failing to show the same commitment in passing these two other free trade agreements, the President is missing out on an important opportunity to do something good for the economy and for jobs.

The President says he wants to double U.S. exports in 5 years. Free trade agreements with Colombia and Panama would go a long way toward meeting that goal—and creating jobs here in America—by opening markets in Latin America.

In my view, the time for delay on these two agreements is over. The President needs to do more than promise to “pursue” these agreements, as he did today. He should work with Congress to pass these two agreements and sign them into law.

This should be an easy one. Colombia is a strong strategic ally in South America, and it has made great strides in addressing the concerns of labor union critics here in the U.S. It has come a long way. We should not walk away from Colombia now. As for Panama, our two nations have had strong strategic and economic ties for years. This agreement would only strengthen those bonds and build on them.

As America sits on the sidelines, our competitors around the world, including the EU and Canada, are moving forward to lower barriers to trade and increase access for their businesses and workers. This is unacceptable, particularly for an administration that is claiming as its top priority to “win the future.”

It won't be enough for Republicans and it shouldn't be enough for the business community to allow the adminis-

tration's trade agenda to start and end with South Korea. We should be passing all pending trade agreements and inking new ones on a bipartisan basis, even when it requires the President bringing his own party along.

We have heard Secretary Clinton, Senator BAUCUS, and Ambassador Kirk all express support for submitting a Colombia FTA to Congress. But the President's own pronouncements continue to fall short. It is not enough for the President to say good things about free trade while siding with labor bosses over job creators and the vast majority of American workers who do not belong to unions and who would largely benefit from opening markets overseas. We shouldn't allow labor union bosses to have veto power over economic policies that benefit us all.

So the question is: will the President allow our allies in South America to continue waiting for us to move forward, or will he send the message that America stands by her allies and is prepared to do something good for American workers, good for the American economy, and good for key allies. Congress is ready to pass these two deals today. It is time for the President to commit to the same.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. JOHANNIS. Mr. President, I compliment the minority leader on his comments on trade. I wish to speak in morning business on the same topic. I will not have to speak long because I have talked about this many times since I joined the Senate over 2 years ago.

Today I will focus on the U.S.-Colombia trade agreement. This agreement was signed by both the United States and Colombia on November 22, 2006. It has been around many years. It is expected to create several thousand jobs. Yet for 5 years, to the detriment of U.S. exporters and job seekers, policymakers have punted on this important trade agreement. The Obama administration has been sitting on the sidelines watching other countries slowly chip away at U.S. competitiveness in the Colombian marketplace. Our friends to the north in Canada and to the south in Mexico wisely negotiated new agreements with Colombia. They saw the void U.S. companies and workers should have been filling and acted to fill that void themselves. I believe it is time we stop watching other countries make the moves that have been teed up for this country for about 5 years.

Implementing the agreement would increase U.S. exports by more than \$½ billion annually and create almost 4,000 much needed jobs in the United States. Simply stated, passing this agreement would help to improve our economy.

In last year's State of the Union Address, we heard our President say:

If America sits on the sidelines while other nations sign trade deals, we will lose the chance to create jobs on our shores.

I applauded his comments. I applauded his desire to increase exports. But, unfortunately, no action was taken on the President's words.

During this last year's State of the Union Address, the President again acknowledged the need for the Colombia trade agreement by saying:

We will strengthen our trade relations with key partners like South Korea and Panama and Colombia.

Once again, these words will ring hollow with no action. Yet again today, in a much touted speech to the Chamber of Commerce, the President talked about pursuing the Colombia trade agreement. I must admit, I asked the question: What on Earth is left to pursue? The agreement was signed nearly 5 years ago. It is ready for approval. All the President needs to do is submit it for our action. If the President thinks there was more pursuing to do, what have we been waiting for the past couple of years? Why has not the administration pursued whatever it is they think needs pursuing for now over 2 years?

Americans who are out of work know this administration is missing an opportunity to say to thousands of Americans: You have a job. Our job creators are waiting. My hope is the President stands behind his remarks today.

This is a golden opportunity for the President to send a signal that his words do have meaning and to show that we can, in fact, work together in a bipartisan way. He could submit the Colombia trade agreement to Congress for approval today and send an enormously powerful message that when he says “pursue,” he means action, not stall.

Folks from my State are anxiously awaiting approval of this agreement as are folks from around the country. We should all be reminded that workers and businesses in our home States will benefit from the Colombia trade agreement. Our farmers and ranchers would benefit from the elimination of tariffs on more than 77 percent of agricultural goods. American workers will see more of their products sold as 76 percent of Colombian tariffs on our industrial goods are eliminated immediately. No doubt about it, this agreement will have a real impact on Nebraskans and other Americans who work hard every day to make a better life for their families.

Let me share a couple of examples of Nebraskans who want to see the U.S.-Colombia trade agreement ratified. Take Nebraska-based manufacturer Valmont Industries, for example. Valmont has loyal customers in Colombia who buy its irrigation pivots. Currently, Colombia imposes a 15-percent duty or tax on those pivot systems. This would be eliminated by the Colombia trade agreement. If the 15-percent duty is, in fact, eliminated, Valmont estimates they would gain market share against European competitors and add 10 to 15 new jobs in Nebraska alone.