between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half.

The Senator from Iowa.

FIGHT AGAINST ISIS

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, as we continue to fight against ISIS and those radicalized by them, I rise today to urge my colleagues to join efforts to provide direct assistance to a critical partner in that fight—the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Yesterday, I joined Senator BARBARA BOXER of California to do just that. We introduced bipartisan legislation to provide temporary authority for the President to provide weapons directly to Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces in the fight against ISIS. This legislation builds upon a similar bipartisan House effort led by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman ED ROYCE and Ranking Member ELIOT ENGEL. The bill's 3-year authorization seeks to reduce delays in arming Peshmerga forces to fight ISIS, while still maintaining consultation with the Iraqi Government.

Beginning in the first gulf war, the Iraqi Kurds and their Peshmerga forces have played a vital role in supporting U.S. interests and a free Iraq, despite limited means of doing so.

Since August 2014, the Kurds have provided sanctuary to nearly 2 million ethnic and religious minorities in Iraqi Kurdistan, and they have been the only force to hold its ground against ISIS in northern Iraq.

Currently, by law, the United States must provide support to the Iraqi Kurds through the Iraqi central government in Baghdad, which has often not been timely or adequate in the past. This has had a negative impact on the Kurds' ability to defend Iraqi territory and provide security for those Iraqis and Syrians who have sought refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Last November, Secretary of State John Kerry said that if Chairman ROYCE wanted to change current law—to ''fix it''—that he invited him to do so. Well, that is exactly what this legislation does.

It makes it the policy of the United States to provide direct assistance to the Kurdistan Regional Government to combat ISIS. We do that because we believe that defeating ISIS is critical to maintaining an inclusive and unified Iraq and that the Iraqi Kurds are key in that goal, as well as to help to end the humanitarian crisis in Iraq through their support of over 1.6 million displaced persons from Iraq and Syria.

The legislation preserves the President's ability to notify the Iraqi Government before weapons, equipment, defense services or related training is provided to Iraqi Kurdish forces.

It ensures this emergency authorization does not construct a precedent of providing direct support to organizations other than a country or an international organization. Finally, it works toward accountability by requiring a report to Congress on U.S. weapons provided to the Iraqi Government which have ended up in the hands of Iranian controlled and supported Shia militias or foreign terrorist groups.

ISIS is deadly and determined, and Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces—our critical partner in the fight against ISIS—need U.S. weapons as quickly as possible.

This 3-year authorization would bolster efforts against ISIS, which are critical to maintaining a unified and stable Iraq and imperative to our national security interests. We simply cannot afford to have future delays at this critical moment in the battle.

I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this much-needed legislation to arm the Iraqi Kurds in the fight against ISIS.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, Thursday a week ago I had the privilege, as a member of the Finance Committee, to serve on the markup of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, trade promotion authority, and trade adjustment and assistance.

This past Saturday, I was given the opportunity to give the Republican response on the radio, and I talked about trade promotion authority. I have been privileged to be ranking member and chairman at one time of the African Affairs Subcommittee. I have traveled back and forth to the continent of Africa, seen the opportunities for trade, business, and exchange with the African people.

I came to the Congress in 1999. In that year, I voted for trade promotion authority for President Bill Clinton, a Democrat. Later, I voted for trade promotion authority for President Bush, a Republican. And I proudly will vote for trade promotion authority for President Obama, a Democrat, because trade is not a partisan issue. It should not be nor should it ever be a partisan issue. It should be an issue of the American people's employment opportunities and jobs in the future. Trade is the cement that holds together the diplomacy and the agreements between countries to work together, play together, and not fight together and not have armed conflict. Trade is important to the security of the United States of America and, in fact, the rest of the world.

But I don't want to talk about trade promotion authority today. I want to talk about the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

Africa is the continent of the 21st century for the United States of America, with 1.5 billion mouths to feed, a number of votes at the United Nations, in terms of the African countries, but most importantly, it has the rarest earth minerals and the natural resources so important to us and the rest of the world. Africa is a gold mine waiting to be mined. But it is not one that we abuse, like the Chinese are abusing it. It is one where we share in prosperity.

When China goes into Africa, they bring their own workers, pay their own workers with Chinese currency, extract the rarest minerals—oil and petroleum and natural resources—and then leave.

When America goes, we invest in the human capital with PEPFAR to reduce the rate of AIDS, and we invest in the Millennium Challenge Corporation to bring jobs, opportunities, and a lack of corruption to the African people.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act is a godsend for the continent of Africa, but it is a godsend to the country of the United States of America. In the future, Africa will become our greatest trading partner if we handle it right.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act that will be before us, along with TPA, is a 10-year extension of our goal. That is important, because it gives predictability to the African countries and the United States. But, more importantly, it gives us the opportunity to file cases with the Trade Representative against those countries that are not playing by the rules.

South Africa is a perfect example. They have blocked access to their market to poultry from the United States of America, with arbitrary and capricious blockades to keep our poultry from going in.

Senator COONS from Delaware and I from Georgia, two big poultry States, have confronted the South Africans. We know that under the new AGOA, when it is passed and ratified by this Congress and by the African countries as well, it will give us the opportunity to file a petition to ask the Trade Representative to file a case to open up the South African practices. And if they are found to be not right—or wrong or corrupt—then we can block South Africa's participation in parts of the AGOA or all of the AGOA. In other words, the AGOA is going to have consequences, much as the Millennium Challenge account does.

Today, when America makes an investment in a foreign country in Africa for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, there are consequences if they don't end corruption, if they don't have private sector participation, if they don't have the rule of law governing their project. We pull the Millennium Challenge Corporation out, and they don't get another grant.

Look at the nation of Ghana, which is now working on its third grant, or the nation of Benin, which is working on its second. Both are improving their infrastructure and their ability to trade and produce with America because of a joint venture between our country and those countries.

I urge all my colleagues in the House and the Senate to adopt the African