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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord, preserve us in our pilgrimage through this life, using us as Your light to a dark world. Free us from hindrances that keep us from accomplishing Your purposes on Earth.

Today, abide with our Senators. Give light to guide them, faith to inspire them, courage to motivate them, and compassion to unite them now and evermore. Lord, help them in the making of laws to execute justice and to set the captives free. Protect them in their work and keep them from those things that lead to ruin. Give them faith to see beyond today, to sow the seeds and cultivate the soil that will bring our Nation a bountiful harvest.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

TRADE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Senate will have the opportunity this afternoon to open the legislative process for a broad 21st century American trade agenda.

Let me remind Senators that the vote we are taking today is not a vote

to approve or disapprove of trade promotion authority. In fact, the bill we will be voting to proceed to is simply a placeholder that will allow us to open a broad debate on trade that our country very much needs. Voting yes to open debate on a 21st century American trade agenda offers every Member of this body the chance to stand up for American workers, American farmers, American entrepreneurs, and American manufacturers. It is a chance to stand with Americans for economic growth, opportunity, and good jobs.

Selling products stamped “Made in America” to the many customers who live beyond our borders is key. That is true across our entire country. It is true in my home State of Kentucky. We know that Kentucky already boasts more than half a million jobs related to trade. We know that nearly a quarter of Kentucky’s manufacturing workers depend on exports for their jobs. And we know that manufacturing jobs tied to exports pay about 18 percent more than non-export related jobs.

So there is every reason to knock down more unfair international trade barriers and bring more benefits back to Americans, right here at home. According to one estimate, Kentucky alone could see thousands more jobs and millions more in economic investment if we enact smart agreements with countries in Europe and the Pacific.

We also know how important these types of agreements are to our national security—especially in the Pacific region. Just last week, seven former Defense Secretaries from both political parties wrote to express their “strongest possible support” for the bill before us today. “The stakes are clear,” they wrote. “There are tremendous strategic benefits. . . . [and] America’s prestige, influence, and leadership are on the line.”

If we care about preserving and extending American leadership in the 21st century, then we cannot cede the

most dynamic region in the world to China. It is true from a national security perspective, and it is true from an economic perspective.

But first, we need fair and enforceable trade legislation that expands congressional oversight over the administration and sets clear rules and procedures for our trade negotiators. We have all those things in the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act, a bill that passed out of the Finance Committee 20 to 6 with strong support from both parties.

We should start the process of building on that bipartisan momentum right now. I know the opportunity to consider complex legislation via regular order became too uncommon in recent years, but that is changing now. The Senate may still be a little rusty, though, so I want to be clear about what today’s vote is. This is a vote to begin a process. This is a vote to begin a debate on a broad trade agenda. Yes, TPA will be part of that debate. But trade adjustment assistance, or TAA, will be also.

Now, there are many Members on my side of the aisle who have real reservations about TAA. I do as well. But I expect that at the end of this process, after the Senate works its will, TAA—trade adjustment assistance—will be part of the package the Senate sends to the House.

The top Democrat on the Finance Committee made it clear at the markup of these trade bills that TAA needed to run alongside TPA. I know that the chairman of the committee, Senator HATCH, has also been working toward that end.

Now, the Finance Committee didn’t just mark up TPA and TAA. It also marked up the African Growth and Opportunity Act and passed the generalized system of preferences bill by voice vote. It reported a customs and enforcement bill by voice vote, too.

So while TPA is clearly the centerpiece of the trade agenda before us,

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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