

stage, support these four bills being moved forward at the same time and then the process can begin of legislating. If we do not—if he does not do that, then it is going to be very difficult to get to the guts of the bills that are reported out of committee.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Oregon.

#### TRADE

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I listened carefully to the remarks of the Senate majority leader, and I believe the majority leader's statement provides potential—potential—to find the bipartisan common ground on trade that we found in the Senate Finance Committee. In the Senate Finance Committee, we passed the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 by a 20-to-6 vote and the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act of 2015 by a 17-to-9 vote. We passed a robust trade enforcement measure and package of trade preferences by voice vote.

Respectfully, I hope that the majority leader would take this morning to work with those on my side of the aisle who are supportive of trade to find a similar bipartisan approach to ensure that all four of the measures I have described are actually enacted.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

#### THE MIDDLE CLASS

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I appreciate the leadership of Senator WYDEN on this, because if you leave out certain bills that help workers, then what you are left with, essentially, is a package that ignores their needs.

I do want to say that I hope we will not proceed to this debate on this free-trade agreement. I stand here as someone who comes from California, where I had voted for half of the trade agreements and I voted against half. I think I am a fair voice for what we should be doing.

If there is one unifying principle about the economics of today, it is this: the middle class is having a very hard time in America today, perhaps the worst time in modern history.

A new University of California study released last week makes it clear how our middle class is being hollowed out. In my State, we have a dynamic workforce. We have dynamic entrepreneurs. We are doing very well. But this study found that the lowest paid 20 percent of California workers have seen their real wages decline by 12 percent since 1979.

Think about that. This is a great country. We always say we have to be optimistic about tomorrow. You do everything right, you play by the rules, and your income for your family, in real terms, goes down by 12 percent. There is something wrong with this. I think everyone will say they want to do more for the middle class, and there is a straightforward agenda we could turn to, to do just that. But instead what do we turn to: a trade agreement that threatens the middle class—that threatens the middle class. What should we be doing here? Not confabbing in a corner over there about how to push a trade bill on this floor that doesn't help working America, we should pass a highway bill. The highway bill is critical—good-paying jobs, businesses that thrive in all of our communities. More than 60,000 of our bridges are structurally deficient, more than 50 percent of our roads are not in good condition. But, oh, no, even though the highway bill expires—we have no more authority to expend money out of that fund come the end of May—they are bringing forward a trade bill that is a threat to the middle class.

Why don't we increase the minimum wage? The minimum wage needs to be raised. Oh, no, they do not want to do that. They have not done it in years. The States are doing it. Oh, no, let's keep people working full time in poverty. So instead of confabbing over there on how to push a trade bill onto this floor, we ought to be raising the minimum wage.

What else should we be doing? We should make college more affordable. We have people here on Social Security in this country who are still paying off their student loans. That is a shame upon America. They cannot even refinance their student loans.

Instead of confabbing in the corner about how to bring a trade bill to this floor, why don't we fix the student loan problem? Why don't we raise the minimum wage? Why don't we pass a highway bill that is funded to help middle-class people?

It is all a matter of perspective, my friends. We still have not done equal pay for equal work, so women are not making what they should. That hurts our women when they retire. They have lost more than \$400,000 in income.

Instead of standing in the corner and figuring out how to bring a trade bill to the floor, they ought to be fixing equal pay for equal work. They ought to be fixing student loans for our students. They ought to be passing a highway bill. They ought to be increasing the minimum wage. They ought to deal with currency fairness because our trading partners play with their currency in order to push forward their products. But oh, no, that is not on the agenda.

We could have an agenda for a vibrant middle class. But instead of that, we are moving toward a trade bill.

I know there are some who disagree with me and who come down to this

floor and say: We are going to create jobs with this trade bill; it is going to be great. Let them explain how we are not going to see some of the 12 million jobs that are manufacturing jobs in America not move to countries that pay 56 cents an hour; another country, \$1.19 an hour.

I know they will disagree with me. They are making all of these promises. The more I hear it, the more I hear the echoes of the NAFTA debate. That was a long time ago, and I was here then. In 1988, I voted for fast-track authority to allow the administration to negotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement. Then, 5 years later, I saw the deal. It was a bad deal, and I voted no, but it was too late—because when I saw the deal, I knew I could not fix it because that is what fast-track is.

What this majority today is saying to us is vote for fast-track and give up your right, Senator BOXER, to amend this trade agreement. They say: Well, it is very transparent. Go down and look at it.

Let me tell you what you have to do to read this agreement. Follow this: You can only take a few of your staffers who have to have a security clearance—because, God knows why, this is secure, this is classified. It has nothing to do with defense. It has nothing to do with going after ISIS. It has nothing to do with any of that, but it is classified.

I go down with my staff whom I can get to go with me, and as soon as I get there, the guard says to me: Hand over your electronics.

OK. I give over my electronics.

Then the guard says: You cannot take notes.

I said: I cannot take notes?

Well, you can take notes, but you have to give them back to me, and I will put them in a file.

I said: Wait a minute. I am going to take notes, then you are going to take my notes away from me, then you are going to have them in a file and you can read my notes—not on your life.

So instead of standing in a corner trying to figure out a way to bring a trade bill to the floor that does not do anything for the middle class, that is held so secretively that you need to go down there and hand over your electronics and give up your right to take notes and bring them back to your office, they ought to come over here and figure out how to help the middle class, how to extend the highway bill, how to raise the minimum wage, how to move toward clean energy, how to fix our currency manipulation that we see abroad.

Anyway, I take you back to 1988. I voted for fast-track for NAFTA. Instead of the millions of new jobs that were promised, by 2010 the United States had lost 700,000 jobs.

Instead of standing in a corner figuring out how we are going to lose more jobs, we ought to do something that works for the middle class.

Let me tell you what happened with NAFTA. Instead of improved pay for