Mr. Johnson is serving as both deputy administrator and acting administrator. The agency has a number of other open positions. It is crying out for leadership. I imagine some of my colleagues are wondering why there is any controversy. I am the chairman of the Clean Air Subcommittee. The controversy over this nomination does not come from the EPW Committee as it overwhelmingly voted 17 to 1 in favor of his nomination.

The ranking member, Senator JEFFORDS, stated, when he was nominated:

> I applaud the decision to nominate Stephen Johnson to head the EPA, and will work to move his nomination through the Senate.

Senator LIEBERMAN also was very complimentary about Mr. Johnson and about the fact that he was qualified and that he was needed at the agency.

I wanted you all to know that we have been working for the last 4, 5 months to pass a bill to reduce powerplant emissions by 70 percent. Senator CARPER and I, who are very good friends, have spent countless hours trying to compromise. He sent a letter to the EPA requesting an analysis that would take several months to complete. Senator CARPER has placed a hold on a nomination because he wants information. Senators have a right to information, but because he wants more analysis performed, here are the facts: EPW has held 24 hearings on multiemissions legislation. EPA has provided Congress with thousands of pages of information. EPA career staff has stated this is the most analyses they can ever remember being performed on a proposal.

Mr. President, I am particularly talking to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. We have more information than the whole Congress had when it passed the Clean Air Amendments in 1990. In May of 2004, the Energy Information Administration performed an analysis similar to what Senator CARPER is requesting. Last year, the administration went much farther than I would have gone. They agreed to do another comprehensive analysis to provide 12 pieces of information on 4 proposals, including many of the things that we have been talking about.

This is not a small analysis. It is going to take 6 to 8 weeks—did you hear me?—to complete.

To reiterate, we have had four administrators in 4 years, and things are not getting done at the EPA. Unfortunately, Mr. Johnson's nomination is being held hostage because of an issue that pales—this difference of opinion pales when you consider how desperately the EPA needs a Director right now. We have to have somebody there to get the leadership.

As I say, I understand my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have said we are going to vote en masse against cloture. Johnson is a good man. He is desperately needed at EPA, and I urge you to vote for cloture so we can confirm the scientist and the first career official to be administrator of the EPA. Thank you.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I yield back my time.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader yields back the time.

Under the previous order, the clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Executive Calendar No. 61, the nomination of Stephen L. Johnson, of Maryland, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Bill Frist, J.M. Inhofe, Sam Brownback, Kay Bailey Hutchison, David Vitter, Orrin Hatch, Elizabeth Dole, Lisa Murkowski, Bob Bennett, John Cornyn, Lamar Alexander, Johnny Isakson, C.S. Bond, Michael B. Enzi, Mike DeWine, John Ensign, Ted Stevens.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Stephen L. Johnson, of Maryland, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. The following Senator was necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT).

Mr. DURBIN announced that the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 61, nays 37, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 115 Leg.]

YEAS—61

Alexander	DeWine	McConnell
Allard	Dole	Murkowski
Allen	Domenici	Nelson (FL)
Baucus	Ensign	Nelson (NE)
Bennett	Enzi	Roberts
Bond	Feingold	Santorum
Brownback	Feinstein	Sessions
Bunning	Frist	Shelby
Burns	Graham	Smith
Burr	Grassley	Snowe
Byrd	Gregg	Specter
Chafee	Hagel	Stevens
Chambliss	Hatch	Sununu
Coburn	Hutchison	Talent
Cochran	Inhofe	Thomas
Coleman	Isakson	Thune
Collins	Kyl	Vitter
Cornyn	Leahy	Voinovich
Craig	Lugar	Warner
Crapo	Martinez	
DeMint	McCain	

NAYS—37

Akaka	Bingaman	Carper
Bayh	Boxer	Clinton
Biden	Cantwell	Conrad
Corzine	Kerry	Reed
Dayton	Kohl	Reid
Dodd	Landrieu	Rockefeller
Dorgan	Lautenberg	Salazar
Durbin	Levin	Sarbanes
Harkin	Lincoln	Schumer
Inouye	Mikulski	Stabenow
Jeffords	Murray	Wyden
Johnson	Obama	
Kennedy	Pryor	

NOT VOTING—2

Lieberman	Lott

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 61, the nays are 37. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Stephen L. Johnson, of Maryland, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The nomination was confirmed.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT J. PORTMAN TO BE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will report Executive Calendar No. 74.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of ROBERT J. PORTMAN, of Ohio, to be United States Trade Representative.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the cloture motion on the nomination is vitiated, and there is now 1 hour for debate under the control of the Senator from Arkansas, Mrs. LINCOLN, and 10 minutes equally divided between the chairman and the ranking member.

Who yields time?

The Senator from Arkansas.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I certainly do appreciate my colleagues' patience this evening. I know that it is late. I apologize for keeping people here late. I find it quite ironic that I come to the floor this late in the evening under the same purposes as my colleague from Delaware, Senator CARPER. Most of it is out of disappointment in the lack of response from this administration on an issue that I think is absolutely critical to the fabric of this Nation, critical to our families, and critical to our children.

I have asked that the Senate take time tonight to debate the nomination of ROBERT PORTMAN to be the U.S. Trade Representative to highlight some of the issues related particularly to Saudi Arabia that I believe deserve more time and attention than they have been getting. I certainly expect Congressman PORTMAN will become involved with these issues in his new position.

I support the nomination of Congressman PORTMAN to be our country's top trade negotiator. I have met with him. I have served with him. I believe he brings the right skills to the position and that he will do a very good job at representing our Nation and its vital interest in that position.

I look forward to working closely with him on many issues in the years ahead that are important to my constituents, as I did with his predecessor. But today I would like to focus on one issue in particular that is critically important to me, and that is the children of this Nation.

In May of 2004, I wrote a letter to then-Ambassador Robert Zoellick, with four of my Finance Committee colleagues, raising objections to Saudi Arabia's accession to the WTO. Over the past several years, our Government has been negotiating a bilateral trade agreement with Saudi Arabia that I understand is now very close to completion. It is also the only major hurdle which prevents Saudi Arabia from being granted favored trading status with the United States and other WTO member nations.

In our letter, we specifically raised concerns regarding Saudi Arabia's participation in the Arab League boycott of Israel and the appropriateness of our Government supporting its admission as a result, given that current law requires the United States to vigorously oppose states that implement that boycott.

We also highlighted concerns regarding Saudi Arabia's efforts to stop the financing of terrorist activities from sources within Saudi Arabia.

Finally, we objected to Saudi Arabia's continued refusal to respect the rights of American women and girls who may never have a meaningful opportunity to leave the Kingdom even as adults. My concerns about the rights of American citizens is one I feel deeply about on a personal level, as a proud citizen of this great Nation, as a mother, and certainly as a Senator from the great State of Arkansas, with tremendous responsibilities to those I serve.

Needless to say, when I received a response to our letter last week, 11 months after we sent the letter to the administration—we received a response last week from our Acting Trade Representative 2 days before Congressman PORTMAN's confirmation hearing—it only referenced the boycott and did not make one reference to the other two issues. I was deeply troubled, and I hope others will be, too.

I was even more alarmed to read press reports about our trade negotiators working around the clock to finish the agreement prior to the meeting between President Bush and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah in Crawford, TX, this last Monday.

I want to start at the beginning of this story regarding the rights of American citizens because I think this issue is very important. Over the past several years, I have worked with Congressman DAN BURTON of Indiana and others to highlight our Government's failure to aggressively defend the rights of American women and children in Saudi Arabia. This issue came to my attention because Heidi Al-Omary from Jonesboro, AR, was abducted by her Saudi-born father in 1997. Saudi Arabia continues to invoke its law and religion to detain my constituent in violation of U.S. law and a valid court order.

Heidi was abducted more than 7 years ago, and she has been stuck there ever since because the Saudi Government does not believe Heidi's father, who is a wanted fugitive in our country, has done anything wrong. This man used our legal system to gain access by pressing the judge for unsupervised visitation, knowing full well that the first unsupervised visit and the child would be gone. Her mother knew that. Her mother argued with the judge, and the judge said: I have to give this man the visitation rights. On the first unsupervised visit in the dead of the night, that woman lost her child. She was taken from her. She did not see her child for 5 years. I do not know how we can stand by and let that happen.

I attended a Little League game with my boys recently. I sat in that field and I thought how blessed I am to be a part of these children's lives. Then I thought of this poor woman whose child was taken from her against our laws, and for 5 years she missed those precious years of that child's life.

Earlier tonight, waiting on these votes, I sat in a dark room with my children as they said their prayers. That woman has not had that. She has not experienced that blessing because her child was taken from her. She was only allowed to see that child 2 years ago, under restrictive supervision.

That is not what we are about in this country. We are about standing up for our children and the citizens of this great land. We have an opportunity to do it, and we should.

Heidi's mother Margaret McClain resides in my home State, in Jonesboro, AR. In July of 2002, Ms. McClain was permitted to travel to Saudi Arabia to visit her daughter. She was brought there under the assumption that she would have a visit with her child. When she arrived, the visit had been moved. She traveled through the desert to some unknown place where she finally got to meet with her daughter with people breathing down her neck. After 5 years, when her child was taken from her in the dead of the night, she finally gets to see her. It is unbelievable to me that that child was taken from this country in 1997 and it took us until 2002 to ask for her return.

Ms. McClain spent 6 days traveling to and from Saudi Arabia, yet Mr. Al-Omary permitted her to spend only a few hours with Heidi during that trip. Prior to that visitation, Ms. McClain had not seen or spoken to her child since she was taken from her from the United States 5 years previously.

During Ms. McClain's first trip to Saudi Arabia in July of 2002, Mr. Al-Omary acted in a verbally abusive manner toward her, took steps to disrupt Ms. McClain's planned visit with her daughter and, in addition, officials at United States diplomatic installations in Saudi Arabia reported at the time that Mr. Al-Omary was uncooperative in arranging United States Consular visits with Heidi.

At one point following Ms. McClain's visit to Saudi Arabia, Mr. Al-Omary demanded the United States Government send him a letter of appreciation for allowing Ms. McClain to visit her daughter who he had kidnapped before he would authorize future United States State Department welfare-and-whereabout visits with their daughter Heidi.

Thankfully, our Government did not send Mr. Al-Omary a thank-you note, and a subsequent welfare-and-whereabout visit did occur after pressure was applied by United States and Saudi officials.

In May of 2003, after months of preparation by Ms. McClain, my office, and the Vice President, Ms. McClain and Heidi's two adult siblings were permitted to travel to Saudi Arabia to see Heidi a second time. Ms. McClain was permitted greater access to her daughter compared to the first visit, but Mr. Al-Omary refused to grant a simple request to spend time alone with her daughter. Ms. McClain is now making preparations for a third trip to Saudi Arabia to visit her daughter again this summer.

I believe in communicating. I believe in working hard to get along. Visitation and communication between the left-behind parent and an abducted child is important and should be encouraged. However, after more than 7 years we ought to do a little bit more than just talking about more travel dates and more plane tickets. We should be talking about bringing a young American citizen home.

For too long, it seems, the U.S. Government's goal in difficult cases such as this has been to simply maximize visitation and contact between U.S. parents and their abducted children in an effort to avoid confrontation with foreign governments. We know there are sensitive situations and sensitive relationships with countries all across the globe, but you do not gain respect until you demand respect in the relationships that you hold.

We in no way have acted aggressively enough in demanding the respect for the laws of our land and the citizens, particularly Heidi, who are being held against their will.

It is safe to say that I am not satisfied with the approach of just another plane ticket and just another travel date. I firmly believe our policy should be aggressively to seek recovery of abducted children, especially when they are taken to a country in which women, regardless of their age, never achieve independence—a right we cherish as Americans and we fight for.

In Saudi Arabia, women and girls are under the complete control of their fathers, husbands, or other close male relatives their entire lives. According to the State Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices most recent edition which was released in

February of this year, all women in the country are prohibited from driving and were dependent upon males for transportation. Likewise, women must obtain written permission from a male relative or guardian before the government would allow them to travel abroad. The requirement to obtain permission from a male relative or guardian applied also to foreign women married to citizens of Saudi Arabia and to the minor and single adult daughters of Saudi fathers.

The report goes on to say that women have few political or social rights and were not treated as equal members of society. Women are restricted in their use of public facilities when men are present. For example, women must enter city buses by separate rear entrances and sit in specially designated sections.

Further, under Saudi law, women may not be admitted to a hospital for medical treatment without the consent of a male relative. However, according to the report, this was not always enforced, thank goodness.

Perhaps most troubling to me is that arranged marriages at an early age are socially acceptable in Saudi Arabia. Heidi is a young lady. She left here as a child, abducted, taken against her will, and against our law. This summer, she turns 13. I am increasingly concerned that she may be deprived of any meaningful choice about who she marries and when she bears a child. Ultimately, Heidi's ability or inability to exercise control over these most personal matters may very well determine if she is ever able to return to her rightful home in the United States.

I recognize the issue of international child abduction is not limited to Saudi Arabia. However, the status of female abductees in the Kingdom is quite unique since, under Saudi law and custom, women have very limited autonomy and may never, ever have a meaningful opportunity to leave, even as adults.

As I mentioned earlier, I focused my attention on this issue because I don't believe our Government is doing everything it can to stand up for the rights of American citizens such as Heidi. After studying the history of Heidi's case and others, I have sadly concluded that our own Government has failed to stand up for Heidi and others such as her. Perhaps most telling in this case is that even though Heidi is a U.S. citizen and was kidnapped in August of 1997, our Government did not formally ask that she be returned until October of 2002. To me, that is inexcusable. It is why I think our Government owes this young girl an extra effort now, when she is most vulnerable, about to turn 13, about to have life-threatening decisions made for her without her consent, and without any of her emotional input.

To bring greater attention to this issue, in June of 2002, all 13 women Senators who were Members at the time sent President Bush a letter, asking him to take up the cause of American women and children held against their will in Saudi Arabia. I received a response to this letter from the then-Secretary of State Colin Powell in November of 2003. And that was 18 months after 13 women Senators wrote to this administration specifically addressed to the President of the United States. I only heard from the Secretary of State after I had placed a hold on the nomination of James Oberwetter to be our Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. In his letter, Secretary Powell stated that the State Department is committed to recovering abducted children and will continue to seek the return of abducted children such as Heidi.

Over the past several years, I have also met with multiple members of the administration, submitted written questions to nominees to the positions in the administration who have jurisdiction over these matters.

In 2002, in 2003, Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs Maura Harty stated in meetings with me, in public testimony, in response to my written questions, that the return of abducted children is a priority and it is the State Department's goal and our Government will continue to press to recover abducted children.

In November of 2003, now United States Ambassador to Saudi Arabia James Oberwetter stated in response to my written questions that the release of Americans who have been abducted to Saudi Arabia is a priority and that he will raise the case of Heidi Al-Omary at the earliest opportunity. That was 2003.

In January of 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated in written responses to my written questions that she would raise the case of Heidi Al-Omary at the earliest opportunity and that the return of abducted children is truly a priority.

In April of 2005, USTR nominee ROBERT PORTMAN made a commitment to me at his confirmation hearing this month and in written responses to my written questions to work with me in collaboration with the State Department to address this issue.

It sounds like more plane tickets. It sounds like just more dates and more plans for visitation, eliminating that mother's opportunity to share the kind of time with her child that each one of us has enjoyed.

Finally, last week, I wrote President Bush prior to his meeting on Monday with Crown Prince Abdullah in Crawford, TX, asking him to raise this issue. I do not know who else to write in the administration. I do not know who else to appeal to. I do not know who else to sit around waiting for an answer from on an issue that could not be more important, our children—not just my children, not just your children, Mr. President, not just the children of other Senators, but children of this Nation.

I continue to be in contact with the White House, and I welcome the opportunity to work with them in resolving this matter. But as my colleague from Delaware came to the floor, and having asked for the last 2 or 3 years for a working relationship that might bring about results, I come to the floor tonight with a heavy heart, disappointed in the response I have gotten over the last 3 years but hopeful, because a mother's heart is always hopeful, just as the mother of that child's heart is hopeful every time I talk to her. Every time I talk to her, she never gives up.

I know officers at the State Department who have responsibility for abduction and wrongful retention cases work hard. I know they do. I know they care about the children involved. I am not doubting that. I am not frustrated with them because I know their hands are tied. They take their instructions from higher up. And higher up does not seem to feel like this is a priority. But I am speaking out to express my profound frustration with the lack of results in this case and our Government's apparent policy of not rocking the boat when difficult-to-solve cases like Heidi's linger in limbo indefinitely. I know our Government has said repeatedly that the return of abducted children is a priority, but it is just not a big enough priority. I do not think we have done everything we can in this case, which brings me back to the nomination now pending before the Senate.

When countries such as Saudi Arabia ask our Government to grant favored trading status, I think it is only appropriate to step back and consider all facets of our relationship and foreign policy goals before we hand them the cookie jar.

I have already discussed in some detail the letter I wrote to Ambassador Zoellick in May of last year. Since that time, in September of 2004, I think it is important to note that the Secretary of State has designated Saudi Arabia as a country of particular concern in the State Department's annual International Religious Freedom Report. So according to the administration, Saudi Arabia's record in this area is getting worse, not better. This status is reserved for a handful of governments that have ''engaged in or tolerate particularly severe violations of religious freedom.'' Respect, Mr. President, respect for our faith and for other faiths—just as we try desperately in our country to respect those.

According to the State Department's report on Saudi Arabia:

> Freedom of religion does not exist. Citizens are denied the freedom to choose or change their religion, and noncitizens practice their beliefs under severe restrictions.

Further, the report states that Saudi custom officials routinely open mail and shipments to search for contraband, which includes the Bible.

As my colleagues may also be aware, under this designation, the President is supposed to choose from a menu of sanctions stipulated by Congress, which raises questions in my mind about why we should be sanctioning

Saudi Arabia on one hand while trying to reward them with a trade deal on the other without evidence of meaningful improvement.

When I inquired this week about the status of sanctions on Saudi Arabia under this law, I was told that even though the deadline established in the statute to make a decision passed on March 15, no decision from this administration has been announced.

I truly regret that Congress does not have the opportunity under current law to vote on a bilateral trade agreement relating to Saudi Arabia's accession to the WTO. I think that could make a real difference with a country such as Saudi Arabia, and it would significantly enhance our Nation's ability to make meaningful progress on many of our foreign policy goals.

To put this into a little different context, I point out what I see as a direct contradiction in our trade policy specific to congressional review of certain countries. I will use the country of Ukraine as a good example. Many of you remember the moving address before a joint session of Congress by the brave new President of the Ukraine just a few weeks ago. We heard him. In his address, he asked, pleaded that Congress graduate his country from what is known as Jackson-Vanik—a procedural step taken by Congress before any former Communist country receives the most favored trading relationship with the United States; a procedural step that is proving to at least get the attention of the Vietnamese Government, that is working desperately within the next year, hopefully; a procedural step that Saudi Arabia does not have to overcome; a procedural step unavailable to Members of Congress to have their legitimate concerns addressed.

We will not have a vote when it comes to their being rewarded with membership to the WTO. And sadly, the only votes we really have much of any say over are these nominations, when we put holds on the names of very capable individuals who want to serve this country. But without that vote, our concerns will be left to Congressman PORTMAN and the administration to raise. So that is why I am here in the dead of the night, to put into the RECORD and, hopefully, into the hearts and minds of the few people who are left listening that these nominations are important, and we do believe in these individuals to have great capabilities, but oftentimes they are not allowed the authority to exercise that.

Given all these issues I have highlighted—the Arab boycott of Israel; terrorism financing, which is costing us more and more in Iraq; the lack of religious freedom; and the lack of respect Saudi Arabia has shown for our laws and its citizens—for the life of me, I cannot understand why we are in such a hurry to walk down the aisle on this trade agreement. What is going on?

Most of the Members of this body know me pretty well. I am not trying to be ugly. But I think someone must stand up and tell the truth. Our policy with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is go along to get along, even when the rights of American citizens and fundamental principles such as equality and freedom that define what is good about our Nation are sacrificed.

As a proud mother of twin boys, I try hard to make sure they understand that actions in life are based on priorities. They are based on choices that each of us has to make. But without a doubt, the choices we make and the actions we take have real and substantive consequences and can have ramifications far beyond a single issue or event. I try so hard to teach them that friendships are based on mutual trust and respect.

To all of those nations across this globe, who are our neighbors, we want desperately to build on our friendships. But if those friendships are to be long lasting and to be worthwhile, they must absolutely be built on respect.

I do not advocate severing our relationship with Saudi Arabia. Neighbors and friends are important to have. Whether you grew up in rural America, as I did, and depend on them to help you bring your crops in or to raise your children or to just get you through the month, it is important to be a good neighbor, and it is important to have good neighbors. But it is hard to have that relationship if you don't ask of them the kind of respect that allows you to depend on one another.

As I said, I don't advocate in severing our relationship with Saudi Arabia. I hope we can reach out. But until this administration takes those steps, starts to answer our letters and our phone calls, and makes a few attempts in reaching out to Saudi Arabia, the leaders of that nation, to express to them how important our children are to us, we have a problem. I do believe we need to step back and fully consider the values we cherish as Americans as we move forward into the future. This is a very real place where it has to begin.

I appreciate the patience of the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there other Senators seeking to yield time? Does the Senator from Arkansas yield back the remainder of her time under the previous order?

Mrs. LINCOLN. I yield back the remainder of my time.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the nomination of ROBERT PORTMAN to be our next United States Trade Representative.

Congress first mandated the appointment of a special representative for trade negotiation in 1962. Since that time, our trade representative has played a vital role in shaping much of our international economic policy. Today, it remains an important position that requires a unique blend of technical and political skills for success.

In that regard, we are fortunate to have ROB PORTMAN as the President's nominee. Congressman PORTMAN has a strong commitment to public service, having served the people of Ohio in the House of Representatives for the past 12 years. His thoughtful consideration of complex issues and his determination to achieve sound public policy have made him an effective leader. He has played major roles in pension, tax, and IRS reform. He is well known for his leadership in the fight against drug abuse. And, as a member of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade, Congressman PORTMAN has been intimately involved in a number of key international trade policy initiatives.

There is strong support for the nominee among the business and agriculture communities. In an open letter sent to Congress on April 18, literally hundreds of companies, associations and Chambers of Commerce expressed their desire to see Congressman PORTMAN confirmed as the next United States Trade Representative, noting that he ''is the right person for the job. During his six terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, he has distinguished himself as a thoughtful and respected leader on international trade and investment issues. Moreover, he has demonstrated a spirit of cooperation that will be essential in the months ahead as Congress considers many trade issues on its agenda.

Similar sentiments are expressed by over 60 representatives of the agriculture sector. In a letter dated April 19 they note that ''Representative Portman has long championed bipartisan solutions to trade'' adding that he ''will bring tremendous talent and experience to this important post. We applaud Representative Portman's deep commitment to enforcing trade agreements and believe his desire to achieve meaningful results for American agriculture and agribusiness is precisely the leadership that is needed in the dynamic and sometimes difficult to navigate world of agriculture trade.''

There is strong interest in moving this nomination quickly. There are a number of important events coming up over the next few weeks including a meeting of the World Trade Organization ministers in early May. So, I hope we will be able to confirm this nominee quickly.

There is a long tradition of legislative and executive branch cooperation on international economic policy. The importance of working together became most evident following the passage of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930 which helped plunge our economy into the Great Depression. In 1934 President Roosevelt recognized that high tariff barriers were strangling our economy. To spur economic growth, he sought and received legislative authority to negotiate reductions in tariff barriers.

That bill, the Trade Agreements Act, embodied the basic partnership between the legislative and executive branches of Government that we know today as Trade Promotion Authority.

It is a partnership that has served this Nation well for the better part of the last century, and hopefully will continue to do so for the next.

But the battle for economic freedom is far from over. We cannot afford to return to the tyranny of tariffs embodied by Smoot-Hawley. Decisions we make in the near future on economic policy will have a significant impact on generations to come. They are decisions we cannot take lightly. Strong leadership at the Office of the United States Trade Representative is key. Congress will soon be considering free trade agreements with Central America, the Dominican Republic and Bahrain.

We also have a number of important bilateral and regional negotiations underway that will bring significant benefits to the U.S. economy. And, perhaps most important, are on-going negotiations at the World Trade Organization. Successfully concluding these negotiations and ensuring their implementation will take a skilled champion of America's interests. I am confident that ROB PORTMAN will effectively fill that role.

I hope my colleagues will join me in strongly supporting Congressman PORTMAN to be our next United States Trade Representative.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter dated April 28, 2005.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE,
Washington, DC, April 28, 2005.

Hon. EVAN BAYH,
U.S. Senator,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR BAYH: As you know, the Senate Finance Committee will be holding a hearing on U.S.–China trade relations before July 15th. As a co-sponsor of legislation to apply countervailing duty laws to non-market economies such as China you will be invited to testify at this hearing. I share your concern about China's use of subsidies and their potential impact on manufacturing and other workers in our economy. The hearing will be an important opportunity to fully air this issue and analyze the best possible policy solutions to the problem including statutory application of countervailing duty laws to non-market economies as proposed by S. 593, the ''Stopping Overseas Subsidies'' Act.

Since we will have a full discussion of the many pressing issues surrounding U.S.–China trade relations prior to July 15th, I appreciate the fact that you agree it will not be necessary to offer an amendment or to seek a stand alone vote on this issue prior to review by the Senate Finance Committee at this hearing.

I appreciate your interest in this issue and look forward to continuing our discussion on this important and timely topic.

Sincerely,

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY,
Chairman.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I rise to urge my colleagues to support the nomination of ROB PORTMAN to fill the post of U.S. Trade Representative. I have been privileged to work with ROB for over 10 years.

As my colleagues know, ROB represents the Cincinnati district which is just over the river from my home in northern Kentucky. Over the years, ROB and I have developed a strong professional relationship as we worked together on issues important to the northern Kentucky-Greater Cincinnati region and the Nation.

But just as importantly, I am honored to be able to call ROB PORTMAN my good friend. My wife Mary and I have come to know ROB, his wife Jane, and their children quite well over the years and we admire and respect them.

So I come to you as someone who knows ROB PORTMAN as well as any other Member of Congress to tell you that President Bush could not have picked a better man for this job. ROB is one of the smartest guys in Washington and he combines that intelligence with sound judgment and a strong moral compass.

We are all aware of ROB's ability to work in a bipartisan manner to accomplish legislative goals. I am confident ROB will bring this ability to build bridges to his job as the U.S. Trade Representative—a job where bridge building is integral to success.

I can't think of anyone that I would rather have representing our country to the world, and I urge my colleagues to act favorably and quickly on his nomination.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT PORTMAN

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I am delighted to take this opportunity to reaffirm my support for Representative PORTMAN's nomination to become the United States Trade Representative. Throughout his professional career, his work his exhibited one common characteristic: excellence.

From his time working as a young lawyer at a prestigious Washington, DC, law firm to his current responsibilities as a member of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade, Representative PORTMAN has done much to make a difference in peoples' lives, in no small part by supporting legislation designed to open markets and strengthen trade relationships. He believes that if we are to create a truly stable and prosperous world and strengthen our own Nation's economic position, our trade policy must be based on free trade agreements that open markets to American goods and products.

Representative PORTMAN also shares my belief that it as important to enforce free trade agreements as it is to create new agreements. Without vigilant enforcement of these agreements there remains a possibility of creating a disadvantageous environment for our exports. This is especially true in one of our most important areas, intellectual property. Representative PORTMAN and I have discussed this issue, but I wanted to reiterate its importance by stating publicly how concerned I am about the recent reports that I have heard regarding the increase in intellectual piracy in nations such as Russia and China.

Representative PORTMAN will face many challenges in his new assignment as United States Trade Representative. One of the most immediate will be the Dominican Republic—Central American Free Trade Agreement. As many others, I have concerns about what this agreement will mean for U.S. jobs and how effectively the U.S. can compete in this global marketplace. However, after diligently studying the agreement, I have come to the conclusion that U.S. companies and consumers, including Utahns, will benefit exponentially from this agreement with increased exports to our regional trading partners and lower domestic prices for many goods and services.

As Congressman PORTMAN has pointed out to many of us and as Acting Representative Allgeier discussed during his testimony before the Senate Finance Committee 2 weeks ago, there are a number of advantages for the United States to ratify this agreement. Particularly interesting is that it would reverse the United States' policy of unilaterally affording preferences to Central American goods under the Caribbean Basin Initiative and the Generalized System of Preferences. That means that where once U.S. goods faced trade hurdles, barriers would be eliminated.

Utah exported over $6 million worth of information technology products to CAFTA nations last year. This treaty will eliminate key distribution barriers in those countries, opening markets to Utah companies in the telecommunications and e-commerce arenas. Utah's farmers will also enjoy access to new markets as CAFTA will immediately eliminate tariffs on wheat, barley, oats and rye. However, despite these advantages we must remain on guard that this agreement and previous agreements are adequately enforced to ensure that American products are fairly treated in these markets.

This is only the ''tip of the iceberg'' of the challenges that Representative PORTMAN will face. I do not believe that the President could have chosen a better person to create and enforce the extraordinary opportunities afforded by new and existing free trade agreements. Representative PORTMAN's nomination has my full support and confidence.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of ROBERT J. PORTMAN, of Ohio, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now return to legislative session.

Mrs. LINCOLN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.