

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. REED). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the managers are trying to work out a number of things on this most important issue of postcloture. During the next hour we will work on that.

RECESS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent the recess previously scheduled begin right now.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 4:24 p.m., recessed until 5:30 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. MILLER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 2538

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, Senator KENNEDY and I are going to be involved in a colloquy for a couple of minutes as we await another amendment. It pertains to the minimum wage. I will have a unanimous consent request that I will propound in a moment.

As we are debating new trade practices, we must not forget important protections for America's workers. Many of these protections are addressed through the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act, but for the last 60 years there has been another important protection for workers, and that is the minimum wage.

It has now been over 6 years since Congress voted to increase the minimum wage. In that time, the cost of living has increased 12 percent while the real value of the minimum wage has steadily declined. In fact, by 2003, all of the gain achieved through the last increase will have been wiped out.

Today, minimum wage employees working 40 hours a week 52 weeks a year earn only \$10,700—more than \$4,000 below the poverty line for a family of three.

In the last 6 years, the purchasing power of the minimum wage has deteriorated to near record low levels. Teacher's aides and health care workers are among the hard-working Americans who are unable to make ends meet on a \$5.15 per hour wage.

In fact, the current minimum wage does not provide enough income to allow full-time workers to afford adequate housing in any area of the country. In my State of South Dakota, the minimum wage is hardly enough for a family to make ends meet.

According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, a minimum wage earner can afford a monthly rent

of no more than \$268. In South Dakota, a worker earning the minimum wage must work 79 hours a week in order to afford a typical two-bedroom apartment. In fact, estimates show that for a worker to be able to afford a two-bedroom apartment in South Dakota, they would have to earn \$10.12—nearly 200 percent of the present minimum wage.

That is why we need to pass Senator KENNEDY's new minimum wage legislation. It would provide a \$1.50 increase over the next 2 years. This is the least we can do, and it is long overdue.

By increasing the minimum wage by \$1.50, working families will receive an additional \$3,000 per year in income. While this increase would not be enough to lift the family of three above the poverty line, it would provide the resources to buy over 15 months of groceries, 8 months of rent, 7 months of utilities, or tuition at a two-year community college. The reality is that American workers are working harder and harder for less and less.

It is time for Congress to address the needs of America's working families. It is time to act and raise the minimum wage.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I wonder if the majority leader would be kind enough to yield for a few questions.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I would be happy to yield to the Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, now we are dealing with the trade bill which will provide benefits, obviously, to many corporations. We also ought to think of the workers, especially those workers at the bottom rung of the economic ladder.

I listened with interest to the Senator from South Dakota. As the Senator pointed out, if we fail to increase the minimum wage, which has not been increased in 6 years, the purchasing power of the minimum wage will near an all-time low.

All we are trying to do is bring it up a little bit, which would be generally below what the average has been over recent years.

Is the Senator aware that if we fail to act with an increase in the minimum wage, it will be virtually at an all-time low if we don't act this year?

Mr. DASCHLE. It is not as well known as I wish it were. But how ironic it would be if in the same Congress that passed tax breaks for those at the very top—tax breaks worth \$50,000 a year to those in the top 1 percent—we could not do something to address the needs of those at the lowest end of the income scale.

I certainly appreciate the graphic depiction of the trend of the minimum wage which the Senator from Massachusetts has outlined. That is the whole idea behind this legislation.

Mr. KENNEDY. I would like to ask the Senator a further question. Does the Senator not agree with me that for years this body—Republicans and Democrats—thought that people who

worked 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year should not have to live in poverty in the United States? Does the Senator understand now that the minimum wage is well below the poverty line for working families?

Some will say we have an earned-income tax credit. But still the fact is for a single mom, or even for families of three, they are still well below the poverty line.

Does the Senator not agree with me, as I believe most Democrats do, that work ought to pay and that those individuals who work 52 weeks of the year, 40 hours a week should at least be at a poverty line, not a living wage even, but a poverty line?

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, the answer to that would be emphatically yes, especially given the stated desire of Members of Congress who have passed welfare reform. The whole idea behind welfare reform was to make work pay, to make work more palatable than welfare. But it is hard for me to understand how a head of household can see how work pays when they are working for the minimum wage, 52 weeks a year, 40 hours a week and earning only \$10,700 a year.

That is why we have people in South Dakota—and I am sure in Massachusetts—working two and three jobs. That is why we are concerned about the pressures on families these days. It is hard to raise children, and it is hard to address all of the other familial responsibilities if you are working two and three jobs a week in an effort to rise above that poverty line that the Senator's chart illustrates.

Mr. KENNEDY. Of course, I believe the increase in the minimum wage is a women's issue because the majority of those earning the minimum wage are women. It is a children's issue because so many of those women have children. It is a civil rights issue because great numbers of those who receive the minimum wage are men and women of color, and it is a fairness issue.

In looking over the historic increases that have been enacted by the Congress since 1956, the proposal is an increase of \$1.50—60 cents the first year, 50 cents the next year, and 40 cents. This represents in the bar chart what the percentage increase would be going back to 1956. It will be actually one of the lowest over the period of the next 3 years.

When the Senator propounds his unanimous consent request, we will probably hear those who will say this is new legislation when we talk about an increase in the minimum wage. We haven't had a chance to study it. This is something that sort of takes us by surprise.

Will the Senator not agree with me that this issue is as old as the 1930s, effectively, when we first enacted the minimum wage, and that this proposal of \$1.50 over 3 years is actually a very modest proposal indeed?

Mr. DASCHLE. The Senator is absolutely right. Not only is it modest but it is overdue.

As I noted in my opening comments, it has been 6 years since we passed an increase in the minimum wage. During that time, as the Senator's chart illustrates, the minimum wage has dramatically declined. The number of hours people have to work goes up and the real value of the money they receive goes down.

More and more people are faced with the prospect of taking two and three jobs in order to climb above that poverty line, at the very time, ironically, when we say that we want work to pay to ensure that they do not go back to welfare.

So I compliment the Senator from Massachusetts for his leadership in this effort and, again, reiterate that the moderate increase that he is proposing is one that is in keeping with past precedent here in the Congress; and it certainly recognizes the need to do something this year.

Mr. KENNEDY. If the majority leader will yield, I thank the leader for the excellent presentations he made this evening on this issue, as well as the excellent speech he made earlier today.

He mentioned that \$3,000 may not mean a lot to Members of Congress who have had four pay increases since the last increase in the minimum wage, but for a minimum wage worker it means 15 months of groceries, 8 months of rent, 7 months of utilities, or full tuition for a community college.

This is, as the majority leader pointed out, a family issue. It represents, to those children, the value of work. And it is a fairness issue.

I thank the majority leader. I hope there will not be objection to the proposal he is about to make.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask, therefore, unanimous consent that the majority leader, after consultation with the Republican leader, may turn to the consideration of S. 2538, the minimum wage increase bill; that the Senate proceed to its consideration no later than the close of business, June 24; and that it be considered under the following time limitation: That there be one amendment for each leader, or their designee, dealing with minimum wage/taxes; that no other amendments or motions be in order, except possible motions to waive the Budget Act; and that no points of order be waived by this agreement; that upon the disposition of these amendments, the bill be read a third time, and the Senate vote on final passage of the bill, without any intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. GRAMM. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, first of all, we are here debating the trade bill that is all about trying to raise wages. It is interesting, in looking at Senator KENNEDY's charts, that in the period where the minimum wage was not raised, the number of children living in

poverty declined by 20 percent in America.

How did that happen? The Government did not raise the minimum wage. Yet we had, in a decade, a precipitous decline in the number of children and people living in poverty.

How is it possible for people to escape poverty without the minimum wage being increased? It is possible because of economic growth. There are many people in this Chamber who have worked at the minimum wage—but they didn't work at it long. A minimum wage job is a steppingstone toward economic progress and success in America.

The plain truth is, we are debating a bill that is more important to working people making low incomes than any minimum wage law that has ever been adopted by any legislative body in history. This bill is about trade, which creates jobs. The average job generated through trade pays wages that are almost 20 percent higher than wages in the other jobs in the American economy.

In dealing with this pro-high-wage bill, we are asked to consider a measure we have never seen; that is not on the calendar; that, as far as I know, has never been introduced; that is not relevant or germane to this debate.

So I have to say, it is hard for me to take this request seriously, though I would say to Senator KENNEDY that we would love to stay and hear him speak on this at length. If he would like to have time set aside from this debate to talk about minimum wage, it is a subject where certainly we have people who are interested in it, who could always be enlightened, who would enjoy hearing Senator KENNEDY talk about it. I would like to do something about wages by passing this trade bill because I think it will do more for people making low incomes than any wage law we could pass.

Let me also say, I have never understood minimum wage laws. If they really work, if we could just pass a law and make wages what we want them to be, why not make wages \$1 million an hour? Then people who need many millions of dollars could work all week and be very rich, and people who need only one million dollars could work 1 hour and be rich.

But there is a problem. And the problem is something you learned in the third grade: anything times zero is zero. The cruel hoax of minimum wage laws is, by setting artificially high wages, it prevents people from getting their foot on the first rung of the economic ladder. It prevents them from getting into the most effective training program in history: on-the-job training.

I wonder, if we had the kind of minimum wage that the Senator from Massachusetts is talking about when I was out trying to get jobs—jobs with the Tom Houston Peanut Company, throwing the Columbus Ledger Inquirer and working for Kroger Grocery Store—I

might have been protected right out of a job. I did not appear to have any skills, and in fact I did not have any skills.

But I learned great things in those jobs. The most important skill that I acquired was the knowledge that I did not want to do those things for a living.

So we would certainly love to hear about this. My colleague is here from Utah. I think he would like to have something to say about it. But we would be perfectly willing to debate this subject tonight at any length that the Senator from Massachusetts would like to talk about it.

But at the end of the talk, we want action. And the action we want is passing this trade bill because it is going to create new jobs at high wages, with great futures. It is going to share the American dream with more people than have ever had it before, with people who missed it the first time around. We are excited about it. And it is going to happen since we have a certain amount of time that has to run off the clock now. So if people want to debate minimum wage, we do not object to debating it. We just want to deal with this trade bill first because we believe it will do more good.

Mr. KENNEDY. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. GRAMM. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. KENNEDY. Well, the Senator, as I understand from his comments, is prepared to debate it, but he is going to object to any consideration to give the Senate of the United States an opportunity to act on it prior to the July recess, as I understand it.

Am I correct in understanding the Senator's position, that he would welcome the discussion and debate, but he objects to any action on the bill—the Senator was glad to ensure that there was going to be voting on the questions of the trade bill in support for the cloture earlier today to make sure we were going to vote on a trade bill. But, as I understand the Senator's position, he objected to the majority leader's request to permit the Senate to vote on the issue of the minimum wage?

Mr. GRAMM. Reclaiming my time, let me say his problem is not with me but with the fact that we are on a trade bill of which almost 70 Members of the Senate voted for cloture, saying they want to get on with passing this trade bill to create more jobs, more growth, more opportunities.

The Senator has proposed a measure which we have never seen, that he has never filed, that is not on the calendar, that is not relevant or germane. We are being asked to waive the rules of the Senate and delay the creation of new jobs from trade for an amendment that is not in order today.

Mr. KENNEDY. If the Senator will yield for a point, this is not being offered as an amendment. It is just a unanimous consent request. We take action on it later on in the session. It was not an attempt to offer it as an amendment tonight.

Mr. GRAMM. Let me say that—

Mr. KENNEDY. But I understand the Senator has objected to that as well.

Mr. GRAMM. We are in the minority here. You control the flow of legislation. I don't understand why you are asking us for permission to bring up bills. All I know is we are here trying to pass a trade bill, and you are talking about another subject. The point I was making is that thanks to the wisdom of our Members, we now have some—how many hours do we have postcloture?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Twenty-three hours.

Mr. GRAMM. Twenty-two hours?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Twenty-three hours.

Mr. GRAMM. Twenty-three hours. So we have ample time, if the Senator wants to talk about this issue, to do it. I know the Senator from Utah wants to say a word about it.

So I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Texas. I would say to the Senator from Massachusetts if he were still in the Chamber, I would be happy to take action on his bill. The action I would seek to take would be to kill it. That is effectively what we have done with our objection. But if the Senator from Massachusetts can get the majority leader to bring it up in another place, I will be happy to vote to kill it in that place, too.

I do so not because I am hardhearted, not because I think the people who are at the bottom of the economic ladder don't need help, not because I want to hurt them, but because I want to help them. I have often said that if I could control what we carve in marble around here, along with the Latin mottos and the other statements we have, we should probably have before us at all times the statement: You cannot repeal the law of supply and demand.

We keep trying in government to repeal the law of supply and demand. We keep trying to set prices or wages at a level different than the market. Well, I don't have the Ph.D. degree in economics my friend from Texas has, but I learned in Economics I that when government sets a price different from where the market would set it, you get one of two things: either a shortage or a surplus. If government sets the price on a commodity and says, this is what we will pay for this commodity because everybody ought to have access to it, and they set the price by law too low, you get a shortage of that commodity because no one wants to produce it at that artificially low price.

We have seen that. Remember when there was price control on natural gas and there was an insufficient supply of natural gas. You got a shortage. When Ronald Reagan became President, he said: We are going to remove price controls on natural gas, and many people—I was not in the Chamber so I can't tell you whether there are some

who are still here who were there at the time—said: Without price regulation, the price of natural gas will go through the roof.

Guess what happened. When we removed the artificial restraint on the price of natural gas, it went up temporarily enough to get a lot of people producing natural gas, and then it came down, ironically, to a price below the price the Government had set, once the market forces took over and people started producing natural gas. You can get a shortage or you can get a surplus.

I remember when my father was on the Banking Committee and the Government set the price of silver for silver coinage. It was higher than the market would pay for silver, and the Government stockpile of silver got bigger and bigger and bigger because people were producing silver, not for the market but for the Government, at an artificially high price.

What does that have to do with the minimum wage? Simply this: If you set the price of unskilled labor by Government fiat at a place where the market would not put it, you are going to create a shortage of jobs. If Government guarantees a price of labor higher than the market, you will get a surplus of people applying for those jobs. It is as simple and as inexorable as that. You cannot repeal the law of supply and demand.

What segment of our economy has the highest level of unemployment? It is the inner cities, among African-American males of teen age. They have the highest level of unemployment of any group measure in the country. Why? Because jobs in the inner city for teenagers who don't have skills have been priced out of the market by minimum wage legislation.

The Senator from Texas talked about his first experience. I went to work at 50 cents an hour when I was 14 years old, and I had the same kind of experience the Senator did. I didn't need the money, but I certainly needed the experience. It taught me the necessity of showing up on time. It taught me the necessity of being dependable, of doing the kinds of things my supervisor wanted me to do whether I wanted to do them or not. It got me involved in a way that I have found valuable all the rest of my life.

If the minimum wage, which was 40 cents an hour at the time—so I was above the minimum wage by 10 cents—had been raised to 65 cents an hour, I would have lost my job. I wasn't worth 65 cents an hour to my employer. Frankly, I was barely worth 50. I would have lost my job.

I cannot understand why some people insist that the poor are better off unemployed at a high rate than working at a slightly lower rate. But that is what we have; that is where we are.

We are talking about this trade bill. We are saying it will help the American economy. At the time when the economy was doing perhaps its best, during the 1990s, and Alan Greenspan

came before the Banking Committee, a Senator asked him: In these boom times, Mr. Chairman, who is benefiting the most from America's prosperity?

I could tell by the way the Senator framed the question that he expected Greenspan to say "the people at the top" because the Senator was particularly concerned about what he considered to be an improper gap between the people at the top and the people at the bottom, and he was going to use Greenspan's answer to make a case for raising the minimum wage: The people at the top have gotten well, the people at the bottom have gotten fat in this time of great economic prosperity; it is the people at the bottom we need to help.

I could tell that was the attitude of the Senator as he asked the question. He was disappointed in Greenspan's answer. Greenspan replied: Unquestionably, Senator, it is the people at the bottom who have benefited from this economic boom.

My memory tells me he said the bottom fifth because, being an economist, he always has to quantify everything. So it was the people in the bottom quintile, to use an economist's phrase, who had benefited the most from the economic boom.

Then the dialog went back and forth between Chairman Greenspan and the Senator, with the Senator saying: Yes, but the people at the top have gotten these enormous financial rewards by virtue of the good economy.

Chairman Greenspan said: Yes, that is true, if you measure the benefit solely in dollars. However, if you measure the benefit in terms of life impact, the people at the bottom, who have had a 40-, 50-, 60-percent blessing in their lives by virtue of the fact that the economy is creating jobs for them, their life has been impacted far more than a millionaire who was at \$2 million net worth and then saw his net worth go to \$3 million. His lifestyle doesn't change much. His life circumstances don't change, if at all. He has more money to invest, and we hope he invests it in a way that will further stimulate the economy, but in terms of what happens in his life, nothing really changes by virtue of his increase in net worth. But someone who could not get a job or who couldn't see his job increase because the economy was flat, now in these times of prosperity can get a job and can see his opportunities increase.

I remember in those times when I talked to employers in the State of Utah and I would ask them: What is your biggest problem?

They said: We can't find anybody to hire. The economy is so good that everybody can get a job.

I had one employer say to me: We will hold a mass job interview. We will advertise in the paper, and 15 or 20 people come in to listen to our pitch as to why they should come to work for us. We will start through our explanation of what this job is, and half of them will get up and walk out because they

know they can walk down the street and hear somebody else's pitch and they can pick and choose. Our problem is, because the economy is so good and there are so many jobs, we are having hard times even filling the entry-level jobs.

Right now, the economy is not so good. Right now, we don't have employers who are complaining about that problem. And right now is not the time to artificially price those entry-level jobs out of the market by attempting to repeal the law of supply and demand.

Who will get hurt the most by an increase in the minimum wage? Ross Perot won't get hurt. Donald Trump won't get hurt. The people at the top won't be affected one way or the other. It is the person who is working for today's minimum wage, whose economic benefit to his employer would not justify the proposed minimum wage, who gets laid off. That is who gets hurt. It is the people at the bottom whom we are trying to help, who will, ironically, suffer the most if the minimum wage goes through.

I can take you to employers in my State who laid people off the last time the minimum wage went up. Employers said: I simply cannot justify it anymore. I would like to pay them, I would like to have them working for me. But, frankly, the economic return I get from them is not worth it when the minimum wage goes up. I am going to lay them off. I can get the same job done with mechanization or some other device, or I can simply do without it in my business. It is just not worth it to me to pay that much.

So those people walked off the job into the unemployment lines, with the cold comfort that their nominal rate was now 50 cents or 75 cents higher than it had been. They were not collecting it, but at least they had the warm feeling of knowing the Government determined that was what they were worth.

The market determines who gets hired. The market determines who gets paid. We cannot repeal the law of supply and demand.

So I say again, the Senator from Massachusetts says he wants action on this bill and he is disturbed that we are not willing to take action. I would be willing to take action, and the action I would want to take for the benefit of the people at the bottom, for the benefit of the African-American teenagers in inner cities who cannot get work, for the benefit of those who are just trying to start out, would be to say let's kill this bill, let's take care of the people at the bottom the best way we can, but one of the things we should not do is price their jobs out of the market and put them in the unemployment lines.

I yield the floor.

ANDEAN TRADE PREFERENCE EXPANSION ACT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, what is the matter now before the Senate?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Amendment No. 3433.

Mr. REID. Is that the Reed of Rhode Island amendment?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 3456, 3457, 3431, AND 3432
WITHDRAWN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on behalf of Senators DURBIN and BOXER, I ask unanimous consent that the following amendments be withdrawn: Amendments Nos. 3456, 3457, 3431, and 3432.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. GRAMM. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, I am sorry, we were having a conference in the cloakroom and I didn't hear.

Mr. REID. Four amendments are being withdrawn.

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, not only do I not object, I concur.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3443

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I make a point of order against the Reed of Rhode Island amendment, No. 3443, that it is not properly drafted.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The point of order is well taken, and the amendment falls.

AMENDMENT NO. 3447

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is my understanding that the next matter in order is the Byrd amendment No. 3447; is that right?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct. The amendment is now pending.

AMENDMENT NO. 3527 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3447

Mr. REID. Mr. President I call up amendment No. 3527, a second-degree amendment to the Byrd amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the second-degree amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID], for Mr. HOLLINGS, proposes an amendment numbered 3527 to Amendment No. 3447.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide for the certification of textile and apparel workers who lose their jobs or who have lost their jobs since the start of 1999 as eligible individuals for purposes of trade adjustment assistance and health insurance benefits)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. . TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE AND HEALTH BENEFITS FOR TEXTILE AND APPAREL WORKERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—An individual employed in the textile or apparel industry before the date of enactment of this Act who, after December 31, 1998—

(1) lost, or loses, his or her job (other than by termination for cause); and

(2) has not been re-employed in that industry, is deemed to be eligible for adjustment assistance under subchapter A of chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.).

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section takes effect on the day after the date of enactment of this Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, what is the pending question?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Amendment No. 3527 to amendment No. 3447.

Mr. BYRD. Is amendment No. 3447 my amendment?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. BYRD. The pending amendment is the second-degree amendment?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I will speak on the first-degree amendment.

Mr. President, there can be little doubt that the various agencies of the executive branch are increasingly in the driver's seat on the important matter of trade. Meanwhile, the Congress and the American people are merely being brought along for the ride.

There are many reasons for this growing inequity, not the least of which is the willingness—at times, in fact, the eagerness—of this body to give us its rights and responsibilities under the Constitution. The Constitution mandates to the legislative branch—the people's branch—authority over foreign trade matters. It cannot, however, force the institution to exercise this authority and assert itself in trade matters. That requires the will of the Members. The lessons we have learned from our most recent experiences with trade agreements should be incentive enough for us to insist on our rights with regard to trade matters. We, after all, represent communities that have lost businesses to other countries and families who have lost their jobs to foreign firms.

Yet here we are, once again, considering a measure that further ties the hands of the members of this institution in the area of trade. Perhaps even worse, we are continuing a trend of blinding ourselves to the details of the trade agreements on which we must ultimately vote. It is almost as if we don't want to know,

At the very least, we should do more to lift the veil on trade negotiations so that we have some idea as to what it is this Nation is signing up to when the agreements go into effect. But to do so we need to establish the means for Members to participate more broadly, and in more detail, in important trade negotiations, as well as to carry out the important oversight functions that our complex trade laws require.

The fast track bill now before the Senate opens that door. The bill establishes the Congressional Oversight Group to serve as an official adviser to